

Southbridge Public Schools Level 5 District Turnaround Plan

June 24, 2016



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Students, families, educators, staff, partners, community members, and friends of the Southbridge Public Schools:

We are pleased to present to you this plan for turning around the Southbridge Public Schools and launching the district on a path for success. Southbridge is rich in diversity, history, and resiliency. Southbridge children deserve a world-class education that leverages these assets and prepares students for the future of possibilities ahead of them. We have listened to a large number of students, families, educators, and community members to learn about your hopes and dreams for your community and the values that are important to you. We want to thank everyone who participated in these community meetings, the Local Stakeholder Group, as well as those who participated in our small focus groups and individual meetings. The ideas that emerged from these community members contributed to creating a new vision for our district:

In the Southbridge Public Schools, ALL students will experience a world-class education, and will graduate as engaged citizens who demonstrate the essential skills required for success in college and career.

The following pages detail our plan for bringing this vision to life. Our plan focuses on improving access to a high-quality education for all Southbridge students and families, and was written with attention to the resources, capacity, supports, accountability, and systems needed for success. By focusing on the following key actions, we believe Southbridge educators and community members, working together, will promote the rapid improvement of the district.

- Develop high-quality teaching and leadership districtwide by raising expectations for instructional programs and academic achievement
- Balance teacher and administrator empowerment with accountability for results
- Provide extended time to increase learning opportunities for both students and staff
- Provide students with multiple pathways toward college and career with the supports to reach their full potential
- Leverage partners' knowledge and skills to increase opportunities and provide wraparound support services for students and families
- Engage and support families as partners in supporting the development of their children
- Improve the management, accountability, and coherence of the school system
- Ensure the sustainability of reforms that lead to strong instructional programs

This Turnaround Plan will result in new opportunities for students, teachers, families, and community members, while continuing to develop and improve promising practices that have begun in the district.

This Plan is founded upon the firm belief that all Southbridge students deserve the highest-quality education. For decades, too many Southbridge students have received education that has left them ill-prepared for postsecondary education and careers. This Plan is designed to transform Southbridge from a school district where a strong education is the exception to one where an excellent education is the rule. We have every reason to believe that we can and will succeed in this vision.

We know that many of our students and families face distinct challenges. This should only strengthen our resolve to come together and collectively ensure that our children have every opportunity to receive a high-quality education. Our investment in our children is a direct investment in our community.

Great things lie ahead for the Southbridge Public Schools, and we have confidence that the strategies outlined in this Plan will result in significant gains and accomplishments for this community. However, only collectively can we achieve the goals and benchmarks included within this document. The moral imperative we have in front of us is to re-imagine and re-design the future of our schools so that ALL our children gain access to what they need to be successful and contributing members of our community.

We look forward to this partnership in the important work of transforming the Southbridge Public Schools. Throughout the process we will measure our progress and continue to seek input on the implementation of the Plan, working together to ensure its success.

Sincerely,



Jessica L. Huizenga
Receiver
Southbridge Public Schools



Mitchell D. Chester
Commissioner
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Executive Summary

Southbridge is a community that is rich in diversity, history, and resiliency. Its children deserve access to a world-class education that leverages these assets and prepares students for a future full of possibilities. For over a decade, the Southbridge community has been underserved. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education first identified Southbridge as an underperforming (Level 4) district in 2004. Since that time, it has been unable to meet the state-approved benchmarks in its improvement plan in a timely manner. Since 2010, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has provided the Southbridge Public Schools (SPS or Southbridge) with targeted assistance funds to support instruction and data analysis as well as funds to hire a staff member to support district-level improvement. These supports, however, proved to be no match for the challenges this community has faced with regard to leadership and governance. In the 6 years since 2010, the district has had 7 superintendents and 7 high-school principals. During this time, a total of 43 individuals have moved in and out of the 9 top school and district leadership positions. In addition, over time the school committee has adopted incoherent and unproductive approaches to the roles and responsibilities that are characteristic of high-performing policy bodies. Such conditions made it extremely unlikely that the school district would achieve the significant improvement gains this community deserves---unless there were some dramatic changes.

Following the Southbridge District Review conducted in October 2015,¹ the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education made the strong recommendation that Southbridge be named a “chronically underperforming” (Level 5) district, allowing the leadership and governance of the district to be directed by a Receiver. A Receiver has the authority of both the superintendent and the school committee, and reports directly to the Commissioner. This recommendation was accepted by a vote of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in January 2016. On May 2, 2016, Dr. Jessica Huizenga became the Receiver for SPS. Over the course of 19 years in education, Dr. Huizenga has worked in several states and in both urban and suburban districts in Massachusetts. She was most recently the assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction and assessment in the Cambridge Public Schools.

Dr. Huizenga began her work by meeting with students, families, educators, and community members, reviewing reports and analyzing the strengths and challenges of the district. The recommendations of the Local Stakeholder Group (LSG), which convened representatives from teachers, parents, town government, and the community, as well as local health, workforce, early education, higher education, and other stakeholders, were especially important.² (See Appendix D to review the LSG recommendations.) From this rich input, a new vision for the Southbridge Public Schools was crafted:

In the Southbridge Public Schools, ALL students will experience a world-class education, and will graduate as engaged citizens who demonstrate the essential skills required for success in college and career.

This high and worthy vision requires a strategic plan. The system—including structures and culture—required to make this vision a reality does not currently exist in Southbridge. This Turnaround Plan,

¹ Center for District and School Accountability, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2015). *District Review Report (DRR), Southbridge Public Schools*. See:

<http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/district-reports/nolevel/2015-0277.pdf>

² See M.G.L. c. 69, §1K(B): <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1K>

which draws upon a variety of research-based resources and guidance about best practices, establishes such a system.

In order to achieve dramatic improvements to the educational experience of students in Southbridge and to attain the district's vision, all Southbridge educators and staff will be called upon to focus their efforts and collaborate in five priority areas:

1. Ensuring an inclusive and supportive school community with high expectations and rigorous, equitable, and personalized instruction for all students, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English learners (ELs);
2. Developing a districtwide professional culture of highly effective teaching and leadership;
3. Creating the conditions to enable and apply evidence-informed decision-making;
4. Establishing systems and processes to cultivate and leverage family engagement and community partnerships; and
5. Organizing the district and reallocating resources to ensure high-quality management, accountability, systemwide coherence, and sustainability.

Each of these priorities has associated benchmarks that have been designed to help the district set priorities and measure progress. These benchmarks also serve as milestones that enable the community to hold the district responsible for timely progress and to celebrate successes along the way.

The five priority areas outlined here represent a significant departure from current practice. After more than 10 years of underperformance, we cannot expect dramatically different outcomes without dramatically different approaches. Students, families, and educators alike should expect the district and their involvement with it to be different.

What will be different?

- Clearer and higher expectations for academics and behavior of all students, as well as more systematic monitoring and supports for achieving these high standards
- Application of new approaches for reducing the opportunity and proficiency gaps between special populations (ELs, SWDs) and general education students
 - Student-specific targeted interventions
 - New instructional approaches
- Develop a cohesive curriculum and coordinated instructional practices to ensure an equitable education for all Southbridge students
- Revision of special education systems to ensure strong connections with general education teachers and programs and enhanced opportunities for student with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Increased attention to and shared ownership of students' social and emotional well-being and engagement
- New and strengthened wraparound services to support the health and emotional well-being of students and families
- New systemwide routines for collecting, managing, and using data
- New expectations for communicating with families
- New approaches for welcoming, educating, and engaging all stakeholders, particularly parents and family members

- Extended school day and/or school year in order to create more time for both student and educator learning
- New possibilities for grade configurations, pathways, and programs offered in each school
- Increased teaming and collaboration among educators
- Professional development, including mentoring, that is effective and strategically designed to build the capacity of educators and administrators so that they can be more empowered to effectively lead their schools
- Supervision and evaluation system for teachers and leaders that supports educators' growth and recognizes areas of expertise, and includes an expedited review process for those not demonstrating effectiveness and growth
- Differentiated roles that tap teachers' specific areas of expertise as assets for school and district improvement
- Reallocation of central-office services and resources, based on priorities
- Changes to collective bargaining agreements, for example, to ensure that the Receiver can hire, retain, and assign the most effective staff where their expertise is needed and to ensure that a new fair and transparent dispute resolution policy is in place and clearly articulated

These changes represent structural shifts as well as cultural shifts. Embracing them will not be easy at first, and is possible only if we do it together. Guided by a shared commitment to Southbridge students' right to a world-class education and with a shared sense of responsibility for bolstering the five priority areas that anchor this improvement system, we will be able to strive together, may occasionally falter together, learn together, and ultimately succeed together.

The approach taken in this Turnaround Plan focuses on developing coherence within and among schools so that together teachers and administrators establish a new baseline understanding of high-quality instructional approaches and curriculum expectations. As schools demonstrate the ability to provide a high-quality program of instruction that serves all students well, the turnaround will shift from primarily district-orchestrated decision making to greater school level empowerment and accountability.

This plan serves as the vehicle for initially creating a shared baseline of excellence and ultimately creates the conditions for school-level empowerment. The relatively small size of Southbridge is ideal for quickly establishing systemwide cohesion and for the Receiver to monitor each school's progress toward the ultimate goal of greater empowerment for all administrators and educators. In each school, changes such as enhanced professional development, differentiated roles for educators, extended time for student and teacher learning, improved routines for learning from student data, and ultimately improved student academic outcomes will be among the leading indicators of a shift to increased school-level autonomy.

Dr. Huizenga looks forward to including the voices of students, educators, families, community, and all relevant stakeholders throughout the receivership to learn more about what is working well and what needs improvement in the schools.

Background and Vision

Background

In 2004 Southbridge was declared a Level 4 underperforming district by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and has remained one of the lowest achieving and least improving districts in the state. Over the last four years, Southbridge students have scored well below state averages in ELA, mathematics, and science on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests, both overall and for the students identified as high-needs. Student Growth Percentiles were 34 in ELA and 30 in mathematics (the state average is 50) and the Composite Performance Indices (CPIs), already 26 and 28.4 percentage points below the state average respectively, fell by 1.3 percent in ELA and 1.4 percent in mathematics over the last 4 years. Of particular concern, only 4 percent of students with disabilities (SWDs) and 9 percent of English learners (ELs) across the district scored advance or proficient on MCAS in 2015 (compared to 22 percent and 36 percent statewide, respectively).³

During the 2014-2015 school year, Southbridge's out-of-school suspension and in-school suspension rates for all students in the district were almost three times the state rate. The four-year cohort graduation rate for all students was more than 23 percentage points lower than the state rate and the five-year graduation rate more than 15 percentage points lower. Similarly, the dropout rate was twice the state rate in 2013-2014 at 4.4 percent (8.5 percent for SWDs).⁴

Leadership and governance in the Southbridge Public Schools is also a major area of concern. Since 2010, the district has had 7 superintendents, 7 high school principals, and 43 individuals in the 9 top school and district leadership positions. As noted in the October 2015 District Review Report, "Inconsistent leadership is at the root of major gaps in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the district and has contributed most directly to the persistently low and declining level of achievement that mark the district." In addition, the school committee has not adhered to its appropriate roles and responsibilities. For example, the District Review Report indicated that the school committee had involved itself in school operations in order to advance personal interest and some interviewees told the review team that the school committee had exerted its influence into personnel matters of the district and misappropriated district funds.⁵ Additionally, the fiscal year 2016 budget process was characterized by ineffective communication and little collaboration between the school committee and town officials. The District Review concluded that, because of dysfunctional governance and the district's inability to secure and sustain consistent leadership at any level, there has been widespread fragility of a number of key systems and practices necessary to support district turnaround.

In January 2016, following the release of the Southbridge District Review Report, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to accept the strong recommendation of the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that the Southbridge Public Schools be named a "chronically underperforming" (Level 5) district. This recommendation was made after over a decade of persistently low student performance.

Committed to making substantial improvements to the educational experience of every student in Southbridge, on March 22, 2016, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education appointed

³ DRR pp. 89, 90, 92

⁴ DRR pp. 13, 93

⁵ DRR pp.3

Dr. Jessica Huizenga as the Receiver for the Southbridge Public Schools, effective May 2, 2016. "Dr. Huizenga's belief that adults, working together, can significantly improve outcomes for students will serve Southbridge well," said Paul Sagan, chairman of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. "The Board looks forward to supporting her commitment to improving the public school opportunities for all of the students in the community, many of whom have been underserved by the district in recent years."

Vision into Action

After reviewing the District Review Report, studying the Local Stakeholder Group recommendations, spending time in the district, and speaking with faculty, families, and students, a new vision for the Southbridge Public Schools was crafted:

In the Southbridge Public Schools, ALL students will experience a world-class education, and will graduate as engaged citizens who demonstrate the essential skills required for success in college and career.

To turn this vision into a strategic and actionable plan, Dr. Huizenga drew upon a variety of research-based resources and guidance about best practices. A meta-analysis of district-reform models and leadership frameworks informed the definition of five critical priority areas. One key source was *Turnaround Practices in Action: A Practice Guide and Policy Analysis*, a document based on a detailed analysis of the experience of the initial 34 Level 4 schools during the first three years of turnaround (2010–2011 to 2012–2013).⁶ This guide presents key turnaround practices to be considered by state leaders, districts, schools, and policymakers striving to improve and sustain ongoing and future turnaround efforts. Further, state standards and guidance were tapped as resources, including the [Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development](#) and the [Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals](#).

It is essential for Southbridge students to experience an integrated educational experience as they move between grade levels so an initial emphasis will also be placed on greater alignment of curriculum and assessment. To achieve such goals, administrators and educators will have to tightly align their efforts across the district to create a new unified body of knowledge about teaching and learning. Ultimately, as these shared understandings of excellence become the norm, administrators and educators will become more empowered to make decisions at the school level that propel learning to even greater heights.

The approach taken in this Turnaround Plan focuses on developing coherence within and among schools so that together teachers and administrators establish a new baseline understanding of high-quality instructional approaches and curriculum expectations. As schools demonstrate the ability to provide a high-quality program of instruction that serves all students well, the turnaround will shift from primarily district-orchestrated decision making to greater school level empowerment and accountability.

This Plan serves as the vehicle for initially creating a shared baseline of excellence and ultimately creates the conditions for school level empowerment. The relatively small size of Southbridge is ideal for quickly establishing systemwide cohesion and for the Receiver to monitor each school's progress toward the

⁶ Lane, B., Unger, C., and Souvanna, P. (2014). *Turnaround Practices in Action: A Practice Guide and Policy Analysis*. Baltimore, MD: Institute for Strategic Leadership and Learning. See [Turnaround Practices in Action: A Practice Guide and Policy Analysis](#).

ultimate goal of greater empowerment for all administrators and educators. In each school, changes such as enhanced professional development, differentiated roles for educators, extended time for student and teacher learning, improved routines for learning from student data, and ultimately improved student academic outcomes will be among the leading indicators for a shift to increased school-level autonomy.

Statutory Basis for the Implementation of the Turnaround Plan

Pursuant to G.L. c. 69, §1K, the Commissioner and the Receiver must create a Turnaround Plan intended to maximize the rapid improvement of the academic achievement of students in the district. The Commissioner and the Receiver will take all appropriate steps necessary to support the goals of the Turnaround Plan. Among other things, through the Turnaround Plan, the Commissioner and the Receiver may expand, alter, or replace the curriculum and program offerings of the district; reallocate the uses of the existing budget of the district; provide funds to increase the salary of an administrator or teacher working in an underperforming school in order to attract or retain highly qualified administrators or teachers, or to reward administrators or teachers who work in chronically underperforming districts that have achieved the annual goals in the Turnaround Plan; expand the school day or school year or both of schools in the district; limit, suspend, or change one or more provisions of any contract or collective bargaining agreement in the district; add pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten classes; following consultation with applicable local unions, require the principal and all administrators, teachers, and staff to reapply for their positions; limit, suspend, or change one or more school district policies or practices, as such policies or practices relate to the underperforming schools in the district; provide job-embedded professional development for teachers in the district; provide increased opportunities for teacher planning time and collaboration focused on improving student instruction; establish a plan for professional development for administrators in the district; develop a strategy to search for and study best practices in areas of demonstrated deficiency in the district; establish strategies to address mobility and transiency among the student population of the district; and establish steps to assure a continuum of high-expertise teachers by aligning the following processes with the common core of professional knowledge and skill: hiring, induction, teacher evaluation, professional development, teacher advancement, school culture, and organizational structure.

The terms outlined in Appendix A are necessary to the successful implementation of the Turnaround Plan and reflect mandatory changes to the district's policies, agreements, and working rules and to any practices or policies pursuant to the collective bargaining agreements. These terms will take effect as of July 1, 2016, and must be included in any future collective bargaining agreements. The Receiver will provide a summary of these changes to each union leader by approximately August 15, 2016. The Commissioner and the Receiver reserve the right to make additional changes to collective bargaining agreements as needed. Nothing contained in the Turnaround Plan or the collective bargaining agreements shall be construed to limit the rights of the Receiver and/or the Commissioner as they are provided for under G.L. c. 69, §1K.

The Turnaround Plan is authorized for a period of three years. The Commissioner and the Receiver may develop additional components of the Plan or amend the Plan, as appropriate. The district will exit from receivership once gains are sufficient and positive change has been institutionalized to ensure continued growth and sustainable results.

Priority Area 1: Ensuring an inclusive and supportive school community with high expectations and rigorous, equitable, and personalized instruction for all students, including students with disabilities and English learners

Challenges: The district review team found that teachers implemented lessons that were accessible for all learners in just 10 percent of observed lessons overall. In observed classrooms, there was little evidence of a positive classroom climate, characterized by respectful behaviors, routines, tone, and discourse. At the middle and high school, observers from the district review team saw only a small number of classes characterized by rigorous instructional practices and well-structured lessons that are essential for productive teaching and learning. Additionally, observers saw limited examples of students taking responsibility for their learning or being purposefully engaged in tasks that promote critical thinking.⁷

The proportion of students absent 10 or more days per year has increased from 45.2 percent in 2010 to 49.7 percent in 2015 (compared to the state rate of 32.9 percent). The district's rate of chronic absence, defined as students absent 10 or more percent of their time in school, has also increased, from 24.0 percent in 2010 to 29.0 percent in 2015 (compared to the state rate of 12.9 percent). These data are particularly concerning because students cannot effectively engage in the educational process if they are chronically absent.⁸

Especially at the secondary level, little or no work has been done to document and align curriculum between grades and with state frameworks, and districtwide, in observed lessons, classroom instruction was not consistently differentiated to account for differences in the learning needs of all students.

Pedagogical practices were not appropriately geared toward the district's growing English learners (ELs) (now 383 students or 17 percent) or students with disabilities (SWDs). The dropout rate for SWDs doubled between 2011 and 2014.⁹ There is only one English language development (ELD) teacher position for all ELs in the middle-school grades, and the one ELD teacher position at the high-school level is currently vacant. Districtwide, there was no EL director for the 383 ELs until the Receiver hired someone for that position. Also, 30 teachers, or approximately 18 percent of the entire staff, have not earned the required Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) endorsement.

Rationale: In order to reduce chronic absence and achieve rapid academic improvement for all students in Southbridge, every classroom in the district needs both a physically and emotionally safe climate that promotes learning, achievement, and self-efficacy. Significant attention will need to be paid to aligning curriculum and focusing on high-quality instruction and assessment, and this must be backed up by tiered systems of support to address the wide range of needs within the student population. Moreover, specific attention must be focused on strengthening instruction and support for ELs and SWDs.

Strategy A: Implement a high-quality, vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment system.¹⁰

High-performing districts have an instructional framework. This means rigorous, high-quality standards-based curricula are taught through high-impact, developmentally appropriate instructional practices and

⁷ DRR pp. 38-39

⁸ DRR pp. 67

⁹ DRR pp. 97

¹⁰ *This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 1 (1,2,3); 10 (1)*

student achievement is monitored and guided by evidence of learning derived from a balanced assessment system.

1. **Establish a Standards-Based Curriculum:** The district will articulate a high-quality standards-based curriculum sequence for all subjects that clearly defines what students should know and be able to do in each grade. It must be vertically aligned across all grades and horizontally aligned across programs. It will be aligned with World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards as well as the Massachusetts curriculum framework. In addition, the district will ensure that educators have curricular resources to deliver engaging instruction that effectively supports all students to acquire literacy and quantitative reasoning knowledge and skills across the curriculum as outlined in the Massachusetts framework.
2. **Create a Balanced Assessment System:** The district will develop a balanced assessment system that includes universal screening and diagnostic assessments that will identify students who are at risk for learning challenges and then link students' needs to tiered systems of support so that educators can monitor equity of opportunity and high expectations across the district. The district will develop and/or identify curriculum-aligned formative assessments so that schools can monitor individual and subgroup progress on curriculum standards; collaboratively review and analyze student data and student work to identify student learning gaps, priorities, and specific learning targets; and ensure timely and appropriate interventions through grade-level data teams and Building-Based Support Teams. Assessments needed for special education purposes will be informed by these identified assessments when determining whether the student's ability to make effective educational progress is impaired.
3. **Focus on High-Impact Instructional Practices:** The district will identify high-impact instructional practices and routines that will be supported systemwide. By working collectively to strengthen a few high-impact instructional practices at a time, educators will be better able to support one another toward mastery. These practices will support high-quality implementation of the standards-based curriculum and will be informed by data-informed analyses of student-specific needs arising from the balanced assessment system.

Strategy B: Ensure the conditions that support high-quality implementation of instructional practices.¹¹

The instructional framework described in Strategy A cannot stand alone in schools. Educators must be able to make instructional decisions that will promote the success of the unique set of learners in each class.

1. **Set and Uphold High Expectations for All:** The district will develop a shared understanding across all schools of rigor and high expectations for academics and behavior. These high expectations will prepare students to develop 21st century skills¹², including critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration.
2. **Promote Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching that will assist teachers in instructing English learners:** The district will provide support as teachers select and use instructional materials, tools, and assessments that are aligned to the needs of a linguistically and culturally diverse student population. In addition, the district will support teachers to strengthen relationship-building and to implement culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

¹¹ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 2 (7).

¹² See: <http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework>

3. **Foster a Positive Learning Environment:** The district will support schools to foster a positive learning environment predicated on a growth mindset and student reflection.

Strategy C: Develop and implement comprehensive strategies to address the needs of ELs throughout the district.¹³

In order for the new instructional guidance system to best meet the needs of Southbridge's many ELs, deliberate attention will be paid to incorporating recommendations from research and best practice about language development.

1. **Develop an Explicit, Systematic, and Standards-Aligned Language Development Program:** The district will develop a strong, systematic program aligned to WIDA and the Massachusetts curriculum framework for ELs in all grades. To this end, it will create protocols for proper systematic identification and testing of potential ELs, and tools for monitoring the services that individual ELs are receiving. It will identify or develop an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum based on ESL model curriculum units, and ESL model-curriculum-unit trainings, as well as aligned English language development formative assessments to monitor the growth of students' language development in ways that can inform instruction. (See also Priority Area 1, Strategy A.)
2. **Strengthen Implementation of Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Teaching Strategies:** The district will provide support and accountability for all educators of ELs to effectively implement SEI instructional strategies. All core academic teachers and the administrators who supervise or evaluate them will be supported to earn the SEI Endorsement, and those core Sheltered Content Instruction (SCI) teachers who have already earned the endorsement will be supported with "extending the learning" professional development. Non-core educators will also complete professional development designed to help them meet the needs of ELs and former English learners. (See also Priority Area 2.)
3. **Provide Student-Specific Supports:** The district will support educators to use multiple sources of data, such as Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) results and other formative and summative assessments, to create action plans to make strategic and student-specific instructional decisions in support of ELs' success. For educators to do this, the district must provide timely access to language development data, including ACCESS, MCAS, and other relevant data; support educators in developing formative assessments that can identify specific student learning gaps and strengths and inform instruction; and aid educators in leveraging Massachusetts framework-aligned curriculum, WIDA resources, and SEI trainings to address students' learning gaps.
4. **Create Alternative Program Options for ELs:** The district will investigate alternative program options that can maximize students' strengths as they build their literacy in English and their native language. Some options may be available for all students, for example, a dual-language program to achieve high levels of language proficiency and literacy in both English and Spanish for native-English speakers and native-Spanish-speakers alike (also referred to as biliteracy). In addition, the district will explore options to address particular needs: for example, a newcomers program to strengthen the foundational skills of students new to the country and a program to meet the needs of ELs with limited consistency in their education (Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)/Students with Limited and Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)). The district will also explore establishing pathways within existing programs, for example, rapid English language acquisition and academic growth options in both Sheltered Content and

¹³ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 5(1,3, 5,7)

English as a Second Language classrooms so that ELs can gain higher levels of English language proficiency throughout their academic experiences.

Strategy D: Develop and implement comprehensive strategies to address the needs of SWDs throughout the district.¹⁴

Southbridge offers a range of programs and services to students with a wide range of disabilities. This Plan offers an opportunity to review these programs, align them with the rest of the Plan, and make decisions that will ensure that they are efficiently and effectively meeting students' needs.

1. **Conduct a Review of Current Programming:** The district will assess existing special education programs to determine the current offerings and populations served. The review will describe current services and programming and summarize any available evidence of effectiveness. The review will provide comprehensive recommendations to improve services and programming.
2. **Provide Comprehensive Services:** The district will provide comprehensive special education services that meet students' needs. This may include the provision of new placement options with clear and culturally competent entry and exit criteria and/or opportunities for students to access inclusive settings with quality instruction and appropriate physical space.
3. **Ensure Systematic Program Monitoring:** The district will establish tracking and analysis procedures that enable educators to review and monitor the effectiveness of proposed changes, such as the new entry and exit criteria. The program will be monitored for effectiveness in the aggregate and by subgroup.

Strategy E: Explore a range of rigorous learning options for students through differentiated pathways.¹⁵

Not all students learn the same way. Southbridge is committed to expanding the pathways available for students' success.

1. **Envision New Academic Options:** The district will investigate new academic options for students that offer differentiated pathways to academic success, such as a dual-language program for elementary students or alternative English learners' programs, as permitted by G.L. c. 69, § 1K(c)(5), establish Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for middle- and high-school students, and provide workforce-development programs for high-school students. To engage the community in developing a proposal for the high school, the district will convene a Secondary Education Redesign Working Group to explore varied academic and technical pathways. The district will also explore partnerships as resources, for example, to provide options for early college programs. (See also Priority Area 5, Strategy A.)
2. **Expect to Graduate All Students:** The district will re-engage students, including SWDs and ELs, who may be at-risk, over-aged, or under-credited, by establishing credit-recovery options for those who have left the district and those at risk of leaving. In addition, the district will develop an early-warning indicator system to proactively identify and intervene with students who may be getting off-track for on-time graduation.
3. **Expand Time on Learning:** The district will create expanded learning options by extending the school day/school year and/or providing programming beyond it. The district will identify resources and partnerships for establishing supplemental learning opportunities, such as vacation academies and expanded summer programs. (See also Priority Area 5 and Appendix A.)

¹⁴ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 3(4,5,7)

¹⁵ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 1 (5), 9 (2)

Strategy F: Build all students’ social and emotional learning (SEL) skills in order to promote wellness and positive school engagement.¹⁶

Social and emotional well-being affects students’ abilities to learn, collaborate, and communicate effectively. By dedicating deliberate attention to this arena, we will support students to engage in ways that not only promote enjoyment of learning but also lead to academic success and college and career readiness.

1. **Foster a Healthy Learning Environment:** The district will foster the development of a safe, healthy, and welcoming learning environment in every school. It will, for example, develop list of districtwide developmental behavior expectations, clarify expectations for classroom positive behavior management and disciplinary approaches, and expand nutrition programs that support student learning, such as breakfast in the classroom. Particular attention will be paid to the impact of poverty on learning and the need for appropriately responsive practices for students coming from impoverished environments.
2. **Build Capacity for Supporting Social and Emotional Learning:** The district will develop/ identify SEL curricular resources and provide professional learning experiences for all faculty to strengthen their skills for managing SEL development and issues, e.g., Responsive Classroom. The district will also add resources and staffing to support SEL development and crisis intervention, including but not limited to resources secured through partnerships that can help provide wraparound services.
3. **Provide Extracurricular Opportunities:** The district will review current offerings and recommend the expansion of options for extracurricular enrichment beyond the school day without additional cost to families as a means of strengthening connections and interest in learning. (See also Priority Area 4, Strategy C.)
4. **Establish a Network of Wraparound Services:** The district will identify internal (school district) and external resources (including community partners and town services of Southbridge) to ensure that students with needs beyond Tier 3 interventions (academic, emotional, behavioral, and medical) receive the services they need.

Implementation Benchmarks

<p>Strategy 1-A: Implement a high-quality, aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment system.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standards-Based Curriculum 2. Balanced Assessment System 3. High-Impact Instructional Practices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By summer 2017, the district will have outlined units of study in math and ELA. II. By spring 2017, the district will complete an inventory of its assessments and will determine which ones will continue to be used and which additional assessments need to be developed or procured.
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¹⁶ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 2 (6), 6 (4)

<p>Strategy 1-B: Ensure the conditions that support high-quality implementation of instructional practices.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High Expectations for All 2. Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Teaching 3. Positive Learning Environment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By fall 2016, identify and communicate two high-impact, instructional practices and routines that will be supported systemwide. II. By winter 2016, using a framework provided by the district, each principal will outline essential actions that will take place during school year 2016–2017 to increase teachers’ capacity to provide high-quality core instruction and tiered supports (e.g., PD, structures and culture).
<p>Strategy 1-C: Develop and implement comprehensive strategies to address the needs of ELs throughout the district.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explicit, Systematic, Standards-Aligned Language Development Program 2. Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Teaching Strategies 3. Student-Specific Supports 4. Alternative Program Options for ELs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By fall 2016, the district will have a plan to ensure that core academic teachers and the administrators who supervise or evaluate them will earn the SEI endorsement by June 30, 2017. II. By spring 2017, the district will develop a plan for non-core educators to complete professional development designed to help them meet the needs of ELs and former English learners. III. By spring 2017, the district will have completed a review of current services for ELs and develop a plan to maximize availability of quality services for gaining higher levels of English language proficiency throughout students’ academic program. IV. By spring 2017, the district will convene a committee to explore alternative program options for ELs, and identify a strategy and timeline for implementing at least one new program model beginning in school year 2017–2018.
<p>Strategy 1-D: Develop and implement comprehensive strategies to address the needs of SWDs throughout the district</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review Current Programming 2. Comprehensive Services 3. Program Monitoring 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By winter 2016, the district will review its special education program identifying best practices, inconsistencies, and gaps in services for SWDs in the district. II. By summer 2017, the district will have analyzed the findings and recommendations in the review and will have developed a plan for implementing the essential elements in subsequent school years.
<p>Strategy 1-E: Explore a range of rigorous learning options for students through differentiated pathways</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Academic Options 2. Graduation Paths for All 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By winter 2016, the district will convene a Secondary Redesign Working Group, which will make recommendations that include new academic and/or technical pathways for community input. (To be launched for the 2018-2019 school year.) II. By winter 2016, the district will hold initial meetings with local higher education institutions about the establishment of early college programming.

<p>Students</p> <p>3. Expanded Time on Learning</p>	<p>III. By spring 2017, the district will have implemented at least one extended learning option.</p>
<p>Strategy 1-F: Build all students’ social and emotional skills in order to promote wellness and positive school engagement</p> <p>1. Healthy Learning Environment</p> <p>2. Capacity-Building for Supporting Social and Emotional Learning</p> <p>3. Extracurricular Opportunities</p> <p>4. Network of Wraparound Services</p>	<p>I. By fall 2016, the district will have identified student, staff, and parent survey tools to be implemented by April 2017 to measure and improve the instructional and social and emotional climate in each school. The district will also articulate a process for collecting, analyzing, and using those data to inform school- and districtwide improvement efforts.</p> <p>II. By summer 2017, the district will review and assess the effectiveness of its current district- and school-based approaches to disciplining students, including programs, protocols, structures, and facilities currently used in those processes (e.g., positive behavioral expectations, student support rooms, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and alternatives to suspension).</p> <p>III. By summer 2017, based on climate data collected during school year 2016–2017, each school will incorporate strategies and professional development to create a safer, healthier, and more welcoming learning environment.</p>

Priority Area 2: Developing a Districtwide Professional Culture of Highly Effective Teaching and Leadership

Challenges: Educators in the Southbridge Public Schools display a lack of professionalism and little evidence of shared responsibility. The School Quality Review (SQR) conducted by School Works, LLC, in 2015 reported “high levels of disrespect” between students and teachers across the district,¹⁷ which it attributed, in part, to the lack of supervision as a result of excessive turnover in district leadership. The district review found that insufficient leadership in grades 6-12 exacerbated the situation such that teachers in those grades were not provided with frequent, formative feedback.¹⁸

The current mentoring program for new teachers is inadequate, prompting one teacher to say, “We keep losing teachers and mentoring could be the difference maker in keeping teachers. [New] people feel they are left on an island.”¹⁹ Not surprisingly there has been a constant turnover of the teaching staff, and formal professional development for teachers, many of whom are new each year, does not have clearly articulated goals that are aligned with district needs and improvement priorities.

Overall, the Southbridge educator evaluation system has not been used effectively to promote the growth and development of all educators, to place student learning at the center, to recognize excellence in teaching and leading, and to set a high bar for professional teaching status. Even though the district has been effectively implementing some elements of the Massachusetts' Educator Evaluation Framework, its subsequent efforts to implement important components related to the collection and use of multiple sources of evaluative evidence have badly faltered. The full implementation of a system aligned to the state Educator Evaluation Framework requires (a) the collection and use of student and staff feedback for teachers and administrators and (b) the identification of District-Determined Measures (DDMs) to assess and subsequently to be used to determine educator Student Impact Ratings. The district has done little to address either of these initiatives and was out of compliance with both of these requirements at the time of the review.²⁰ Of note, because of the recent history of high turnover both of school and district leaders, administrator personnel folders were often incomplete.²¹

The conditions described above have compromised the district’s ability to retain educators, improve classroom instruction, and ultimately to meet students’ needs for educational opportunities and achievement.

Rationale: It is essential that a professional culture that includes high expectations be infused at every level of the system ---at the classroom, school, and district levels. Effective leadership will be essential to this work. Leadership, however, must be shared and aimed at building collective responsibility for student outcomes. Achieving this cultural shift will help to recruit and retain effective educators. Strengthening induction, mentoring, and ongoing professional development will also improve the

¹⁷ SchoolWorks, LLC (April 13-15, 2015). Southbridge Middle/High School - School Quality Review. See also: [http://www.southbridge.k12.ma.us/modules/groups/homepagefiles/cms/474046/File/Spring%202015%20Southbridge%20SQR%20Report%20-%20Final\(1\).pdf](http://www.southbridge.k12.ma.us/modules/groups/homepagefiles/cms/474046/File/Spring%202015%20Southbridge%20SQR%20Report%20-%20Final(1).pdf) This report was commissioned by the district and partially funded by ESE.

¹⁸ DRR pp. 55, 58

¹⁹ DRR pp. 58

²⁰ DRR pp. 55

²¹ DRR pp. 56

district's capacity to develop a competent and stable workforce of educators who are committed to high achievement and continuous improvement. In order to attract and retain the highest quality staff and secure a professional culture, it will be essential to revamp the compensation system to ensure that individual effectiveness, professional growth, contribution to school and district improvement efforts, and student academic growth are key factors. (See also Priority Area 5, Strategy C.)

Strategy A: Transform the district's culture into one of high standards and positive regard for all students and staff.²²

The dramatic improvements called for in this Plan require significant changes, and there will be challenges along the way. The community will benefit from a culture that remains laser-focused on what is most important: high standards and positive regard for all students and staff.

1. **Promote Academic, Social, Emotional, and Cultural Competence:** The district will support students and staff to develop competence in multiple areas, including academic, social, emotional, and cultural. It will set high standards for students and staff and cultivate a professional/academic culture of internal accountability to those standards. High standards for attendance and engagement will also be enforced.
2. **Establish Student-Focused Teams:** The district will connect the work of new and existing teams to student outcomes. Teams will focus on student growth and achievement and will review current student placement, tracking, and retention policies. (See also Priority Area 1, Strategies D and C.)
3. **Recognize Educators' Professional Expertise:** The district will recognize excellence in teaching and leading, and it will validate specific areas of expertise educators demonstrate by providing opportunities for differentiated roles that leverage recognized expertise in both formal and informal ways at the school and district levels. In addition, the district will revamp its compensation approach in ways that recognize the value of educators' knowledge and skills. (See also Appendix A, III.)

Strategy B: Cultivate Shared Leadership, Collective Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration.²³

This hard work requires an "all hands on deck" approach. This plan can best maximize the skills that all stakeholders have to offer if it pays deliberate attention to the structure and skills required for effective teaming and collaboration.

1. **Agree upon Core Values:** The district will identify shared core values that will form a solid foundation for cultural improvement and a touchstone for decision-making.
2. **Cultivate Teaming:** The district will support the establishment and/or ongoing improvement of teams designed to recognize role-based expertise and ensure authentic engagement in decision-making. To ensure teacher voice, teams will be formed at many levels including: grade-level, department, school-site instructional leadership teams, Superintendent's Roundtable, and teacher and community councils. (See also Appendix A, III and IV.)
3. **Support Capacity-Building for Collaboration:** The district will provide leadership training to support team members to effectively collaborate, communicate, and align their improvement efforts.

²² This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 9

²³ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 4 (15), 7(8)

Strategy C: Attract and retain highly qualified, diverse teachers and leaders.²⁴

The most significant school-based factor in students' learning is the quality of the teaching they receive. Southbridge is committed to attracting and retaining a caring, qualified, and highly competent workforce of teachers and leaders.

1. **Improve Recruitment:** The district will partner with regional teacher preparation programs to grow their own highly qualified, diverse workforce. In particular, the district will work with partner organizations to recruit and prepare current paraprofessionals and Southbridge residents to become SPS teachers, and provide pathways for talented SPS teachers to become leaders.
2. **Strengthen Induction:** The district will strengthen induction programs for teachers and leaders and ensure that they receive multi-year support. These programs may include the support of carefully selected, matched, trained mentors, a cohort model, or other individualized or differentiated supports.
3. **Provide Differentiated Roles:** The district will provide opportunities for differentiated professional experiences, supported with relevant leadership development training. Roles may include, for example: professional learning leader, team leader, mentor opportunities (for student teachers, novice teachers, or veteran teachers in need of improvement), or peer assistants within a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program.

Strategy D: Ensure ongoing growth of teachers and leaders.²⁵

1. **Provide Powerful Professional Development for All:** The district will provide effective professional learning for all staff. Professional development opportunities for professional staff will be designed and supported to meet the *Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development*.²⁶ (See also Priority Area 5, Strategy A and Appendix A, IV.)
2. **Establish and Address Learning Priorities for Teachers:** The district will establish a coherent plan for professional development priorities for all teachers.
3. **Establish and Address Learning Priorities for Leaders:** The district will provide professional development in instructional leadership for school and district leaders/administrators.

Strategy E: Supervise and evaluate district employees through a process that balances support for continuous improvement with accountability.²⁷

Students are not the only ones learning in SPS. All educators---teachers and leaders---will have individual professional development plans with accountability for meeting targets and growth-oriented support for reaching them.

1. **Improve the Educator Evaluation System:** Educators and administrators will be evaluated according to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework, as adapted by the Receiver. The Receiver will develop and implement evaluation processes for all other district personnel. Technology tools will be a resource in this new system to ensure timely and clear communication and access to information. The district will communicate the new process to

²⁴ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 4 (1,3,12,13,15)

²⁵ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 7 (all)

²⁶ See Massachusetts Standards for Professional Development: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/standards.htm>

²⁷ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 4 (2,5)

relevant stakeholders, and support them to ensure they are aware of important distinctions between the process to which they are accustomed and this new process. (See also Appendix A, V.)

2. **Provide Individualized Support:** The district will provide staff with professional learning support that addresses their individualized learning goals, ensuring that teachers receive actionable feedback for improvement and coaching for continuous improvement. They will also have access to individualized learning resources, including web-based tools and services, higher education-based programs, and other resources.

Implementation Benchmarks

<p>Strategy 2-A: Transform the district’s culture into one of high standards and positive regard for all students and staff</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic, Social, Emotional, and Cultural Competence 2. Student-Focused Teams 3. Recognizing Educators’ Professional Expertise 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, the district will establish accurate and efficient record-keeping protocols, accountability routines, and intervention supports related to attendance and punctuality of both students and staff. II. By spring 2016, the district will begin implementation of routines that recognize, celebrate, and leverage the strengths and accomplishments of students and staff.
<p>Strategy 2-B: Cultivate shared leadership, collective responsibility, and professional collaboration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Core Values 2. Teaming 3. Capacity Building for Collaboration 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By fall 2016, the district will establish a Superintendent’s Roundtable (composed of district and school leaders, teachers, partners, and high school students) charged with identifying shared core values to be the foundation for cultural improvement, monitoring the benchmarks of the Turnaround Plan, and making recommendations to support its success. II. By spring 2017, the district will hold the first cross-school convening of school Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) to begin the process of cross-team learning, establishing systemwide practices, and identifying supports needed for success.
<p>Strategy 2-C: Attract and retain highly qualified, diverse teachers & leaders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment 2. Induction 3. Differentiated Roles 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, the district will announce the details of an improved induction and mentoring program, in conjunction with recruitment efforts for school year 2017–2018. II. By spring 2017, the district will have convened an initial meeting with potential higher education partners about creating a teacher preparation pipeline for Southbridge. III. By spring 2017, the Superintendent’s Roundtable will make some initial recommendations about opportunities for teachers with identified areas of expertise to assume differentiated professional roles.

<p>Strategy 2-D: Ensure ongoing growth of teachers and leaders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Powerful Professional Development for All 2. Learning Priorities for Teachers 3. Learning Priorities for Leaders 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, the district will establish a plan for all available professional learning opportunities to be listed, managed, and evaluated online as part of the comprehensive information system. II. By winter 2016, the district will have a plan for ensuring that all school and district leaders have received professional learning support for establishing safe and supportive schools.
<p>Strategy 2-E: Supervise and evaluate district employees through a process that balances support for continuous improvement with accountability</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervision and Evaluation System 2. Individualized Support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By summer 2016, the district will implement the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework, as adapted by the Receiver, and will distribute clear communication about the adapted educator evaluation system to all relevant stakeholders. II. By winter 2017, information about available professional learning opportunities will be linked to MA Educator Evaluation Standards so that teachers can better identify opportunities that meet their specific needs.

Priority Area 3: Create the Conditions to Enable and Apply Evidence-Informed Decision-making.

Challenges: The technology infrastructure is currently inconsistent across schools and does not support improved instruction, communication, assessment, and data collection. There is little coherent data other than MCAS results for groups of teachers to collect and analyze. The middle and high schools have not developed an effective and coordinated approach to assessment. Further, there is inadequate time and expertise to systematically collect, analyze, and use what limited assessment data there is to improve teaching and learning. Administrators acknowledged that there is very little use of data to identify professional development (PD) goals or professional learning objectives.²⁸

The Receiver found inconsistent reporting of teacher absence from school to school.

Rationale: A comprehensive information management system is needed to provide consistent, accurate data to all stakeholder groups. Once such a system is established, providing time and support for educators and parents to learn how to access and use the system will be key. Equally essential will be providing common planning time and establishing effective routines and protocols to analyze and mine the data so that assessments can illuminate ways to improve instruction, monitor progress, and make key decisions about program adoption, staffing, and instruction. The ultimate goal of this priority area is to create the conditions for success by fostering a districtwide data-literate culture and engaging in consistent practices for data-driven decision-making.

Strategy A: Improve and integrate information collection and management systems.²⁹

Evidence-informed decision-making requires an efficient, feasible, and user-friendly system for collecting, managing, and retrieving multiple forms of evidence and information.

1. **Conduct an audit of existing data systems and technology assets and limitations:** The district will create an inventory of existing data sources and systems and assess existing technology resources (hardware, software, trained personnel, and service contracts) in each school and at the district level, to make recommendations in consultation with educators for a comprehensive information management system.
2. **Establish a comprehensive information management system:** The district will ensure that all stakeholders are able to access the evidence needed to make informed decisions. The system will make data available in a timely, easily accessible way that produces cross-data analyses and easy-to-interpret displays. Students, teachers, leaders and families will have access to student data on achievement, attendance, and behavior.

Strategy B: Provide system-level supports for efficient and effective data use processes.³⁰

The comprehensive information management system proposed will make data and information available. In order for stakeholders to successfully adopt new routines for using this complex technology tool to make stronger decisions about teaching and learning, they will need to believe that it is worth the effort to receive training to learn how to use it well, to be supported by protocols for facilitating and monitoring success, and to have sufficient time to engage in data use.

1. **Enable faculty, parents, and students to access the system:** The district will ensure that stakeholders have access to the specific data and information they need for their particular role.

²⁸ DRR pp. 58

²⁹ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 10 (1,2)

³⁰ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 1 (1,2,3), 7 (7,14)

2. **Provide Professional Development (PD) to support educators in developing effective routines for use:** The district will strengthen educators' knowledge and skills to engage in effective and efficient data use routines.
3. **Develop routines and protocols that help ensure quality and monitor progress:** The district will provide tools to support high quality data use routines, such as implementation rubrics, data team guides, and meeting protocols.
4. **Build in time for educators' effective information management and use:** The district will see to it that educators have sufficient time to collect and enter information, retrieve and use information, and engage in collaborative planning with others using data. (See also Priority Area 5, Strategy A.)

Strategy C: Ensure data are being used to inform high-leverage decisions.³¹

Our comprehensive information management system can be used in many ways. To respond to the urgent need for accelerated improvement, the district will support educators to focus their data skills initially on improving the quality of four types of high-leverage decisions.

1. **Use data to make programming decisions:** The school and district leaders will model effective use of evidence-informed decision-making as determinations are made about curriculum, the addition or termination of programs, student placement, and time on learning. They will support all educators to do so as well. (See also Priority Area 1.)
2. **Use data to make staffing decisions:** School and district leaders will model effective evidence-informed decision-making about who is teaching what and to whom. This includes decisions at the district level about hiring and placement of teachers, as well course assignment and intervention grouping at the school level. (See also Priority Area 2.) In addition, school and district leaders will monitor the equity of access to highly-qualified teachers and special programs for critical student populations, including:
 - ELs
 - SWDs
 - Students living with trauma
3. **Use data to make instructional decisions:** The district will conduct an audit of instructional materials and other resource allocations together with data to make strategic decisions about reallocations or new acquisitions that have the best chances of strengthening the quality of teaching. In addition, the district will develop/refine instructional implementation rubrics that can help communicate and monitor the quality of implementation of key instructional practices. At the school level, educators will be supported to make evidence-informed instructional decisions (See also Priority Area 3, Strategy B.)
4. **Use data to monitor student results and support:** The district will create dashboards that enable school and district leaders to monitor the progress of all students and key subgroups on critical benchmarks. The district will also support school instructional leadership teams to maintain and respond to the data by collaboratively investigating what strategies seem to be working for which students, and which teachers need to try a new intervention strategy. (See also Priority Area 1.)

³¹ *This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 7 (1,4), 10(1,2)*

Implementation Benchmarks

<p>Strategy 3-A: Improve and integrate information collection and management systems</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct an audit of existing data systems and technology assets and limitations 2. Establish a comprehensive information management system 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, the district will conduct a comprehensive audit of existing data systems that will identify clear strengths of current assets. The district will also articulate a vision of the comprehensive information system it needs and specific recommendations for addressing challenges and gaps.
<p>Strategy 3-B: Provide system-level supports for efficient and effective data use processes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that faculty, parents and students are able and inclined to access the system 2. Provide Professional Development (PD) to support educators in developing effective routines for use 3. Develop routines and protocols that help ensure quality and monitor progress 4. Ensure educators have sufficient time for effective information management and use 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, districtwide common assessments will have been identified in math. II. By summer 2017, the district will ensure that all staff know how to access data from the new comprehensive information management system and have time within their work schedules for managing and using the data. III. By fall 2017, the district will be prepared to implement a plan that uses multiple pathways to educate students and families about how to access and use the comprehensive information system.
<p>Strategy 3-C: Ensure that data are being used to inform high-leverage decisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use data to make programming decisions 2. Use data to make staffing decisions 3. Use data to make instructional decisions 4. Use data to monitor student results and support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By winter 2016, the district will model data-informed decision-making by communicating key decisions about curriculum, programs, or time on learning together with the student data that informed each decision. II. By spring 2017, the district will have completed an audit of instructional materials and resource allocations, and the district will have developed and piloted an instructional implementation rubric. The data will be collected in such a way that makes it accessible from (and used for analysis within) the comprehensive information system. III. By winter 2016 all school Instructional Leadership Teams and the Superintendent’s Roundtable will begin a quarterly routine of monitoring the progress made by key subgroups on critical benchmarks and ensuring that responses are implemented where needed.

Priority Area 4: Establish Systems and Processes to Cultivate and Leverage Family and Community Partnerships

Challenges: The Local Stakeholder Group noted that the district has not put resources in place to provide adequate communication between key district staff and newly arrived ELs and their families, the vast majority of whom speak Spanish, and it identified the need for a wraparound coordinator for each school to engage and align external support systems and partners. Furthermore, town officials reported that the community has lost faith in the school committee as a result of its inability to stabilize leadership in the district and because of the absence of budget transparency. Not surprisingly, while town support for the schools has consistently exceeded required net school spending (NSS), the percentage of school spending over the NSS requirement has declined from 14.3 percent in fiscal year 2008 to 5.1 percent in fiscal year 2015. The district review noted that support of the town council for the school budget was particularly low in 2015, in part because of the absence of budget transparency (also the limited funds available.) The school committee had requested a 12 percent increase but the town council only approved a 1.2 percent increase. While there is currently more confidence and collaboration, a new superintendent will face considerable challenges in establishing credibility as a sound financial manager.³²

Rationale: By strengthening parent and community engagement at all levels and particularly at the upper-elementary through high-school levels, the schools will be able to fill gaps in knowledge, resources, and funding and tap into the strengths of the Southbridge community.

Offering a welcoming school culture for all families and community members and strengthening the communication pathways between the schools and the community will convey the school district's commitment to students and their families. Providing families with strategies on how to support the learning and development of their children as well as creating ways for students to extend their learning after school, during vacations, and over the summer will be key components of this work. Schools cannot accomplish all this alone. Finding and developing effective community partners and linking the work of schools to higher education resources will bolster the impact of efforts in this arena. The strategies included in this Priority Area emerged from the work of *The Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals (Fundamentals)*--- a multi-year collaborative process in defining guidelines and research-based practices for the engagement of families, schools, and communities.³³

Ensuring the sustainability of the reforms that the Receiver will put in place, however, will require the full commitment and support of town officials because the schools will ultimately depend on support services, adequate funding, and a shared vision as to the opportunities open to Southbridge students. To rebuild trust, the district is committed to being transparent and engaging families and the broader community in its decision-making process.

Strategy A: Welcome All Stakeholders.³⁴

Schools create and ensure a welcoming culture and environment for all stakeholders, including families, children and youth, school staff, and community members. Stakeholders are valued and connected to

³² DRR pp. 81

³³ See: Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnerships:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/sac/parent/FSCPfundamentals.pdf>

³⁴ *This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 7 (1,7)*

each other in support of high academic expectations, achievement, and healthy development.

1. **Create a respectful atmosphere for stakeholders:** Schools and the district share responsibility with stakeholders from all neighborhoods and backgrounds to identify and break down barriers to family engagement.
2. **Develop personal relationships:** Family volunteers from diverse neighborhoods and backgrounds are trained to serve as mentors to help other families become more engaged in the school.
3. **Provide opportunities for volunteering:** Schools and the district reaches out to families and community members across all neighborhoods and backgrounds, acknowledging unique experiences and skills, and offering varied volunteer opportunities at home, at school, and in the community.
4. **Ensure accessible programming by removing obstacles to participation:** School and district share responsibility with stakeholders to plan and implement high-quality family programs to be held at school and in community locations (i.e., libraries, community centers, faith-based centers, homes in different neighborhoods, work sites, etc.).

Strategy B: Communicate Effectively.

Families and school staff engage in regular, meaningful dialogue about learning, high academic expectations, achievement, and healthy development of students. Schools systematically share information and solicit input about school goals and initiatives with the broader community.

1. **Use multiple communication paths:** Families, students, communities, and school staff communicate in interactive ways, both formally and informally, in language that families and students can understand, using a range of interpersonal and community strategies, technology, and media. The principal meets regularly with the school council, parents, and student government/leadership groups, and keeps them informed of current school issues, concerns, and solutions. (See also Priority Area 1, Strategy B.)
2. **Survey families, students, and community members to identify issues and concerns:** Survey results are used to guide the development of the student engagement plan, family engagement programs, and other school activities.
3. **Provide access to school administration:** Principal and other school administrators have an open-door policy that extends equitably across the school community. They meet regularly with families in small groups, or one-on-one as needed, in schools and in different neighborhoods. In addition the administration collaborates with town officials through regular communication and engagement in plans for continuous improvement and refinement.
4. **Facilitate connections among families and students and community:** School and school council/parent groups take steps to help parents build relationships and achieve greater cross-cultural understanding of other families beyond their own neighborhood and culture.

Strategy C: Support the Success of Children and Youth.

Families, schools, and community organizations focus their collaboration on supporting student learning and healthy development in all settings (including home, school, and community) and provide regular, meaningful opportunities for children and youth to strengthen the knowledge and skills needed to be effective 21st century citizens.

1. **Link student work to learning standards which lead to college and career readiness for all students:** Families, school, and community representatives collaborate to align school events

and community resources to learning standards, and to ensure that families and students understand how to connect the standards to their learning.

2. **Use standardized test results and other data to inform decision-making about increasing student achievement:** School and district jointly analyze student performance data and jointly develop strategies to identify and reduce proficiency gaps among and between groups of students. Families, school personnel, and community representatives participate in academic and curriculum committees to discuss how to raise expectations and achievement for every student on academic and vocational paths. (See also Priority Area 3, Strategy C.)
3. **Help families support learning at home and at school:** Schools, parent groups and the community collaborate to develop and implement ongoing, systemic strategies based on academic performance data and needs identified by families to assist families in supporting their children’s learning both at home and in school. The district forms a planning committee for parent academies and surveys families and community partners to identify interest in activities to promote wellness, adult education, and home-to-school connections.
4. **Promote out-of-school-time learning:** Schools actively collaborate with diverse community organizations, local businesses, and families to develop and provide learning opportunities. These programs are aligned with learning standards and contribute to measurable student achievement.

Strategy D: Advocate for Each Child and Youth.³⁵

Families, schools, and community respect and value the uniqueness of each child and youth and are empowered to advocate for all students to ensure that they are treated equitably and have access to high-quality learning opportunities.

1. **Help families understand how the school and district operate, as well as the rights and responsibilities of parents under federal and state laws:** Schools, parent groups, and the community work together to help all parents understand how their schools operate and how to exercise their rights under state and federal education laws in order to promote student learning and achievement.
2. **Develop families’ capacity to be effective advocates for their children and to engage in civic advocacy for student achievement:** Schools, parent groups, and the community work together to establish school policies and procedures that support and promote parents as advocates and active partners in decision-making at school.
3. **Make resources available to support student achievement leading to college and career readiness:** Schools, parent groups, and the community collaborate to create a family resource center that is accessible to all families and provides information about services that support achievement; makes referrals to academic, vocational, college and career readiness programs; and helps plan family, school, and community events and informational programs.
4. **Help students and families make smooth transitions and ensure that students are college and career ready:** A comprehensive program is developed jointly by school and parent groups to help families stay connected and remain involved as their children progress through school. A college-going culture is fostered in all grades with each classroom “adopting” a university or college, and partnerships are created and expanded between the district, local colleges and universities, and community businesses to expand opportunities for career exploration and preparation.

³⁵ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 7(1,2,3)

Strategy E: Share Power and Responsibility.

Families, educators, and community partners have access, voice and value in informing, influencing, and creating policies, practices, and programs affecting children, youth, and families.

1. **Develop effective parent engagement groups that represent all families:** Underrepresented, underserved, and/or isolated or disconnected students and families are active participants in the improvement of school performance.
2. **Develop parent leadership:** Members of underrepresented and underserved families are actively solicited, trained, and supported to become effective parent leaders.
3. **Ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in all decisions that affect children:** School-Site Councils, Special Education Advisory Councils, and EL Parent Councils will use the findings from the needs assessments conducted with families, school staff, community representatives, and students in the high schools to inform their decision-making.
4. **Connect families and schools to local officials:** Local officials are invited to participate in community events in the district. In school year 2016–2017, working with the Southbridge Police Department, the district will ensure that there are trained school resource officers in place at the middle and high schools, during school hours and at school-based events. The district will also build on its existing partnerships with the DCF, the Department of Probation, and the Juvenile Court.

Strategy F: Partner with the Community.³⁶

Families and school staff collaborate with community partners to connect students and families to expanded learning opportunities, access to health and nutrition resources, and community services in order to support achievement and civic participation.

1. **Link to community resources:** School staff and school volunteers (and a paid parent liaison, if one is in place) use the school’s family resource center as a place to inform families about services, make referrals to programs, and help with follow-up. (See also Priority Area 4, Strategy D.)
2. **Partner with community groups to strengthen families and support student success:** Community and business representatives work with schools and parent leaders to assess the school community’s needs. Partnerships and programs are developed and strengthened to support students’ success and are aligned with school and district priorities, including improving partnerships with community-based early education and preschool programs to better ensure that students are ready to enter SPS at grade level. Together each school and its partners find creative solutions to funding and staffing needs. (See also Priority Area 4, Strategy E.)
3. **Turn the school into a hub of community life:** Schools and the district offer resources and activities for the whole community, drawing on community agencies, organizations, and other educational institutions. Schools are open extended hours for use by outside groups to provide services and educational opportunities to families and the community.

³⁶ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 7 (1)

Implementation Benchmarks

<p>Strategy 4-A: Welcoming All Stakeholders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating a respectful atmosphere for stakeholders 2. Developing personal relationships 3. Providing opportunities for volunteering 4. Ensuring accessible programming by removing economic obstacles to participation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By winter 2017, each principal will complete a family and community engagement audit about the use of family volunteers, programs available to parents, approaches taken to communicate with parents, and current level of parent participation in school events and conferences. II. Based on the results of these audits as well as parent surveys, principals will be responsible for working with their school councils to develop strategies and SMART goals by May 2017 to drive improvement in this important arena for the school year 2017-2018.
<p>Strategy 4-B: Communicating Effectively</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using multiple communication paths 2. Surveying families, students, and community members to identify issues and concerns 3. Providing access to school administration 4. Facilitating connections among families and students and community 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, the district will survey parents to solicit input about their perspectives as parents of students attending district schools. The results of this survey will help identify issues and concerns.
<p>Strategy 4-C: Supporting the Success of Children and Youth</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Linking student work to learning standards which lead to college and career readiness for all students 2. Using standardized test results and other data to inform decision-making about increasing student achievement 3. Helping families support learning at home and at school 4. Promoting out-of-school-time learning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, the district will form a planning committee for parent academies and will survey families and community partners to identify interest in activities to promote wellness, adult education, and home-to-school connections.
<p>Strategy 4-D: Advocating for Each Child and Youth</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, the district will develop a plan to create a Family Resource Center and will identify the necessary funding, space, and human capital to support it. The

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Helping families understand how the schools and district operate, as well as the rights and responsibilities of parents under federal and state laws 2. Developing families' capacity to be effective advocates for their children and to engage in civic advocacy for student achievement 3. Learning about resources to support student achievement leading to college and career readiness 4. Helping students and families make smooth transitions and ensure that students are college and career ready 	<p>purpose of the Center will be to provide support for parents on how to best strengthen their children's development and academic success as well as to help parents understand their rights and responsibilities under state and federal laws.</p>
<p>Strategy 4-E: Sharing Power and Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing effective parent engagement groups that represent all families 2. Developing parent leadership 3. Ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice in all decisions that affect children 4. Connecting families and schools to local officials 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, a districtwide parent advisory council will be launched. The Council will be made up of school Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) leaders, representatives of state and local agencies that work with parents, as well as other pertinent community members.
<p>Strategy 4-F: Partnering with the Community</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Linking to community resources 2. Partnering with community groups to strengthen families and support student success 3. Turning each school into a hub of community life 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By spring 2017, collaborate with community organizations to strengthen early childhood and preschool opportunities.

Priority Area 5: Organize the District and Reallocate Resources to Ensure High-Quality Management, Accountability, Systemwide Coherence and Sustainability

Challenges: The district's recent history of administrative instability, low educator retention, and turmoil at both the central office and school levels, has had a detrimental impact. This chronic leadership crisis has critically impaired the district's ability to develop and sustain those key systems and practices that are essential for school improvement. The lack of student growth and improvement is a direct result of ineffective or non-existent systems and structures. District and school leaders have acknowledged the need to consistently use supervisory and evaluative practices and policies that are fully aligned with the state Educator Evaluation Framework, to promote high performance expectations, and to improve professional practice, climate, and overall effectiveness of instruction.³⁷

Central office roles and responsibilities were not properly designed to support the priorities and strategies needed to revive the education system. Current schedules and collective bargaining agreements do not allow for adequate instructional, planning, or professional development (PD) time to improve the quality and quantity of teaching and learning and to ensure that the needs of all students, including ELs and SWDs, are being met.

In the 2015 Southbridge District Review Report interviewees reported that the amount of time provided for PD is insufficient to enable staff to engage in the sustained, coordinated, and collaborative work needed to build professional ability and improve student achievement. The district calendar includes only one full and four early-release PD days during the school year. Further, with the exception of two of the district's elementary schools, which schedule regular grade-level teacher meetings, there are few regularly scheduled, job embedded common planning or meeting time opportunities available to staff across the district.³⁸

Rationale: In order to support Southbridge's turnaround efforts, it is imperative to develop new district structures and ways of working with schools in order to increase the district's capacity to effectively monitor and support schools and establish innovative ideas and strategies across the district. It is also necessary to alter schedules, contracts, collective bargaining agreements, priorities, and the allocation of scarce resources in order to allow for common planning time (which will improve curriculum, professional practice, and the use of data); provide extended time on learning (that is needed to rapidly accelerate student learning and close proficiency gaps); strengthen and increase PD (to increase the quality of instruction and improve school climate); open up alternative pathways and extra-curricular offerings (to meet the needs of all students, including those not currently being served by the system); recruit and retain highly effective educators (to ensure that students have access to high-quality instruction); and promote a professional culture. The district will then need to monitor progress and make adjustments as needed in order to ensure continuous improvement and sustainability both during and beyond the period of receivership.

In order to reach greater levels of achievement, SPS students need more instructional time that is used effectively to deliver high-quality instruction and enrichment opportunities. The district needs excellent teaching and leadership in every school, and high-performing staff throughout the district. The Receiver and principals require the authority to make staffing decisions based on the best interests of students. The Receiver must have the ability to resolve employee disputes fairly and expeditiously while

³⁷ DRR pp. 55-56

³⁸ DRR pp. 57

maintaining her authority over all components of the Turnaround Plan. The Receiver must have the flexibility to reorganize the district staff, and choose and retain principals and other administrative staff who are effective leaders, have the appropriate skills, and bring focus and urgency in implementing the Turnaround Plan.

Southbridge has many of the characteristics and challenges of a high-needs urban district, so the strategies outlined in this Priority Area were informed by the five common “implementation challenges” of urban districts, as identified by the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.³⁹

Strategy A: Redesign the organization to carry out the Plan.⁴⁰

1. **Extend Learning Time:** The district will maximize time for students’, teachers’, and leaders’ learning, including:
 - For the 2016-2017 school year, teachers will report to work on Monday, August 22, 2016, and students will return to school on Monday, August 29, 2016. The week of August 22, 2016, will include four (4) days of PD, and one (1) day for teacher orientation/classroom orientation. The last day of school will be June 20, 2017 (including 5 snow days). (See also Appendix A, IV)
 - As of the 2017-2018 school year, there will be a minimum of 1,330 hours of instruction for students K-8. (See also Appendix A, IV.)
 - The Receiver will establish the school calendar each year. (See also Appendix A, IV.)
 - All newly-hired teachers may be required to participate in a week-long teacher orientation/induction program as part of their professional obligation without additional compensation. (See also Appendix A, IV.)
 - Modify school schedules to increase opportunities for common planning time and professional development to support instructional planning and the identification and monitoring of both academic and non-academic interventions. (See also Appendix A, IV.)
 - Explore additional school calendar options to provide additional time for instruction and enrichment, to reach the required minimum of 1,330 hours of instruction annually for students K-8. This may involve programming options during vacations, extended day, year-long opportunities, and summer school.
2. **Explore Alternate School Configurations and Options:** The district will review alternate school configurations and school options, including but not limited to:
 - Developing a proposal for an alternative middle- and high-school program that would effectively and efficiently address the social and emotional needs of the district’s most at-risk student population (See also Priority Area 1, Strategy E.)
 - Reviewing and improving school assignment processes
 - Reviewing grade configurations and school distribution to maximize opportunities for teaching and learning
 - Exploring possible pathway options (i.e., dual language, blended learning, and Montessori)
 - Using proven partners and operators to support the development and provision of school pathway options

³⁹ See the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education: <http://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/>

⁴⁰ *This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 1(8)*

3. **Improve Central Office Support Services:** The district will improve alignment of central office design to support this Plan’s priorities. It will also examine the location of district offices and resources relative to where they need to be used and will reallocate funds and staff previously allocated to the school committee to support school initiatives and district priorities.
4. **Safeguard Services for Students with Disabilities and English Learners:** The district will provide adequate resources and supports to serve ELs and SWDs effectively. This includes establishing procedures to meet requirements and stay focused on students, establishing a system that strengthens accountability and documents necessary communication, and ensuring all educators are SEI endorsed. The district’s efforts to establish procedures and systems in support of SWDs will be informed by the review of current programming. (See also Priority Area 1, Strategy D.)

Strategy B: Allocate resources in alignment with the Plan.

1. **Review Distribution of Financial Resources:** The district will analyze funding and expenditures in order to spend less on areas that have low impact on student learning and spend more on those items that are more effective and better serve the needs of students. It will arrange an external budget review, compare expenditures to plan priorities, explore options for regionalization, and establish a database for attracting prospective funders and for tracking requests to external funding sources. (See also Appendix A, VI.)
2. **Capitalize Upon Technology:** The district will maximize use of technology in support of effective and efficient instruction, data systems, and communication. To accomplish this, it will audit technology infrastructure, create a districtwide technology strategy, ensure adequate technology support system/ personnel, and identify key investments required for quality implementation. (See also Priority Area 3, Strategy A.)
3. **Maximize Use of Time:** The district will streamline policies to improve efficiency. It will audit routines and procedures and conduct a cost-benefit analysis, to include, for example:
 - Purchasing and procurement
 - Staffing (hiring timeline, sub assignments, etc.)
 - Student referral and assignment processes
4. **Manage Contract Services Efficiently:** The district will provide flexibility for procurement policies and processes to meet the needs of the district in the most efficient and timely manner. It will limit, modify, suspend, or invalidate existing vendor contracts where appropriate and identify additional external partnerships that might support struggling schools. (See also Appendix A.)

Strategy C: Develop and manage human capital to carry out the Plan.⁴¹

The district will align Human Resources’ policies with Plan priorities.

1. **Establish a District Leadership Team:** The district will assemble a high-performing district leadership team that will ensure that each school and each department has the support and the accountability to improve teaching and learning at an accelerated pace. The Receiver will have the authority to reorganize, consolidate or abolish department, functions or positions; establish new department, functions or positions; and transfer duties and functions, as she sees fit in order to best organize the district to maximize the rapid improvement of the academic achievement of students. (See also Appendix A, VI.)

⁴¹ This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 11(3)

2. **Develop a Strategic Human Capital Plan:** The district will develop a strategic plan to recruit, develop, and retain highly effective educators (See also Priority Area 2, Strategies A and C; Appendix A, VI.). The plan will include strategies to:
 - Strengthen supervision and evaluation practices so that effective teaching and leading are consistently expected and supported.
 - Select and retain the most effective staff: In order to ensure that the most effective staff are selected and retained, the Receiver and principals will have authority to select the best qualified staff from both internal and external candidates, without regard to seniority.
 - Establish selection criteria for layoffs which will include the following, as appropriate: qualifications; licensure; work history; multiple measures of student learning; operational need; and the best interests of students.
 - Reassign educators and other staff as necessary.
 - Reorganize departments, positions, functions, as necessary.
 - Adjust the salary of an individual employee in order to attract or retain a highly-qualified employee, or when the Receiver otherwise determines that such an adjustment is in the best interest of the district.
3. **Implement a Receiver Review:** The district will implement an expedited Receiver Review so that staff who are not demonstrating effectiveness and growth either improve sufficiently or are dismissed. It will conduct a prompt review of educators on Directed Growth Plans, and educators and other staff on Improvement Plans, and those employees otherwise identified as having poor performance. Educators and other staff whose performance is determined to be unsatisfactory after receiving feedback and an opportunity to improve will be dismissed. (See also Appendix A, V.)
4. **Create a Dispute-Resolution Process:** SPS will use a dispute-resolution process that values employees' input; allows for the fair, rapid, and effective resolution of employee concerns; and ensures that the Receiver retains authority over all components of the Turnaround Plan. (See also Appendix A, VIII.)
5. **Revamp compensation approach:** The district will revamp its approach to compensation to ensure that individual effectiveness, professional growth, and student academic growth are key factors in a professional compensation system and that employees have opportunities for additional responsibility and leadership. (See also Appendix A, III.)

Strategy D: Use the Receiver's authorities to lay the foundation for successful turnaround

1. **Limit, Suspend, or Change Provisions in Collective Bargaining Agreements to Support Plan Priorities:** The district will limit, suspend, or change provisions in collective bargaining agreements and employment contracts in order to achieve the goals of the Turnaround Plan. Further, the Receiver must have the ability to address issues as they arise, including making additional changes to collective bargaining agreements to maximize the rapid improvement of the academic performance of Southbridge students. Appendix A contains changes will take effect as of July 1, 2016, and must be incorporated into future collective bargaining agreements. The Receiver and/or the Commissioner, at their discretion, will initiate discussions and processes as appropriate pursuant to G.L. c. 69, § 1K. (See also Appendix A.)
2. **Change employment contracts:** Certain changes to employment contracts between the district and individual employees are necessary to achieve the goals of the Turnaround Plan. The Receiver must have the flexibility to choose and retain principals and other administrative staff who are effective leaders, have the appropriate skills, and bring focus and urgency in

implementing the terms of the Turnaround Plan. Consequently, the end date for all employment contracts or agreements entered into with administrative staff members before the declaration of receivership on January 26, 2016, is changed to June 30, 2017. The Receiver may, at her discretion, extend any such employment contract or exercise the termination provisions of any contract. The changed end date supersedes any contrary provisions in any individual employment contract between the district and an individual employee. (See also Appendix A.)

Strategy E: Use data to ensure that the Plan is executed effectively and benefits from organizational learning.⁴²

1. **Commit to Continuous Improvement:** The district will build in time and routines for reflecting on the Plan and making mid-course corrections.
2. **Establish a Superintendent’s Roundtable:** The district will convene a Roundtable of the central office team plus principals and teacher leaders from each school. The Roundtable will:
 - Monitor implementation and success in the aggregate, by school, and by sub-group
 - Review implementation of initiatives underway in support of the Turnaround Plan
 - Monitor culture and climate conditions critical to the success of the Turnaround Plan

Implementation Benchmarks

<p>Strategy 5-A: Redesign the organization to carry out the Plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School time 2. School configuration and options 3. Central office support services 4. Special populations targeted by the Plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By winter 2016 a <i>draft</i> district schedule for the school year 2017-2018 will be developed that details how learning time will be extended for both students and staff. The Receiver will submit a <i>final</i> schedule by April 2017. II. By fall 2016, schools will report to the Receiver their current schedules for using or creating common planning time for grade/subject teachers (or creating alternative opportunities for frequent collaboration) in school year 2016-2017. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Priority Area 1, Strategy C. By fall 2016, the district will have a plan to ensure that core academic teachers and the administrators who supervise or evaluate them will earn the SEI endorsement by June 30, 2017. • See Priority Area 1, Strategy C. By spring 2017, the district will develop a plan for non-core academic teachers to successfully complete an SEI course. • See Priority Area 1, Strategy C. By spring 2017, the district will have completed a review of current services for ELs and develop a plan to maximize availability of quality services for gaining higher levels of English language proficiency throughout students’ academic program. • See Priority Area 1, Strategy C. By spring 2017, the district will convene a committee to explore alternative program options for ELs, and identify a strategy and timeline for implementing at least one new program model beginning
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⁴² This strategy is informed by the following Local Stakeholder Group recommendations: 11(3)

	<p>in school year 2017–2018.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● See Priority Area 1, Strategy D. By winter 2016, the district will review its special education program identifying best practices, inconsistencies, and gaps in services for SWDs in the district. ● See Priority Area 1, Strategy D. By summer 2017, the district will have analyzed the findings and recommendations in the review of its special education program and will have developed a plan for implementing the essential elements in subsequent school years.
<p>Strategy 5-B: Allocate resources in alignment with the Plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial resources 2. Technology 3. Time 4. Contract services 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By fall, 2016, the district will complete a review of all district expenditures and develop recommendations for areas where reductions and increases are needed. These recommendations will serve as a basis for developing a fiscal year 2018 budget. II. By winter 2016, the district will review existing municipal and district procurement protocols and recommend changes where appropriate to achieve optimal efficiencies and effective use of resources.
<p>Strategy 5-C: Develop and manage human capital to carry out the plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District Leadership Team 2. Strategic Human Capital Plan 3. Receiver’s Review 4. Dispute resolution 5. Revamp compensation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. By winter 2016 the Receiver and her team will complete a Receiver’s Review of all staff who are on improvement plans, directed growth plans, or in need of improvement. Specific action plans and timelines will be developed and those staff who do not meet their improvement goals will have their employment terminated. II. By spring 2017, a revised compensation plan will be developed and disseminated to all teachers.
<p>Strategy 5-D: Use the Receiver’s authorities to lay the foundation for successful turnaround</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provisions in collective bargaining agreements 2. Employment contracts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. The Receiver will provide a summary of the changes to the district’s collective bargaining agreements to each union leader by fall 2016.
<p>Strategy 5-E: Use data to ensure that the plan is executed effectively and benefits from organizational learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment to continuous improvement 2. Superintendent’s Roundtable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● See Priority Area 2, Strategy B. By fall 2016, the district will establish a Superintendent’s Roundtable (composed of district and school leaders, teachers, partners, and high school students) charged with identifying shared core values to be the foundation for cultural improvement, monitoring the benchmarks of the Turnaround Plan, and making recommendations to support its success.

Statutory Components of the Turnaround Plan

This section highlights how the Turnaround Plan addresses the specific student subgroups and programmatic areas identified in G.L. c. 69, § 1K(c).

The secretaries of health and human services, public safety, labor, and workforce development and other applicable state and local social service, health, and child welfare officials will coordinate with the Secretary of Education and the Commissioner about the implementation of strategies related to items 1–3 below, subject to appropriation.

(1) Steps to address social service and health needs of students and their families in order to help students arrive and remain at school ready to learn.

The district has multiple partnerships with area health service organizations and local and state agencies to provide direct health services, prevention programs, and health information to students and their families. The district will review its existing partnerships in order to coordinate health services, prevention, and screening activities taking place throughout the district, at all grade levels.

The district currently works with outside providers to offer school-based psychotherapy in its schools, matched with individual students' needs. The district will ensure that students receive necessary mental health screenings and services as appropriate. The district will improve its coordination of outside health and mental health service providers with district service providers to maximize student and family access. Where gaps are found between students' needs and existing service partnerships, the district will develop a plan for addressing those needs through new collaborations. The district's internal ability to address the health and mental health needs of its students will be augmented by the addition of more specialized personnel, expanded social and emotional programming. In addition, the district will develop a proposal for an alternative middle and high school to address the social and emotional needs of our most at-risk students. For the 2016-2017 school year, the district will be working with licensed independent clinical social workers to provide, with parent support, psychotherapy to identified high-risk students. The district will also be administering a universal behavioral health screening test to identify at-risk students, integrating an evidence-based social and emotional learning curriculum, and implementing multi-tiered systems of supports. The middle school will also be beginning an advisory program in the 2016-2017 school year to improve student-teacher relationships and students in grades 6-12 will be required to participate in one extracurricular activity each year.

The district will also refine its processes for referring students and families to social service providers, as necessary. For instance, the district will build on relationships with outside agencies, including state agencies such as the Department of Children and Families (DCF), to assess and revise its current protocols for referring students and families to community social service resources. The district will continue to work with partners to provide professional development and information to school nurses, health educators, and behavioral health staff who work with students and families to address health needs.

See also Priority Area 2.

(2) Steps to improve or expand child welfare services and as appropriate law enforcement services in the community, as appropriate, to promote a safe and secure learning environment.

The district's focus on building a culture of high academic and behavioral expectations will be central to its ability to foster safe and secure learning environments districtwide. Further developing the district's partnerships with child welfare and law enforcement organizations---and incorporating these partners throughout its work---will help to reinforce the culture the district is working to create. The district recognizes that these partners must be involved in the work at the early, culture-setting stages in order to identify law enforcement and safety concerns.

The district is revising the current disciplinary practices and protocols by transitioning to a restorative justice model at the middle and high schools. The district is committed to analyzing the successes and challenges of this model to determine whether this protocol will reduce problematic student behaviors and address high disciplinary referrals, as well as in-school and out-of-school suspension rates. If the program is shown to be effective, the district will determine how it may expand the use of restorative justice practices to additional schools, at different grade levels. Some staff from Southbridge schools have already registered for an initial restorative justice training in June 2016.

Educators and other staff will use data to assess school climate, student supports, and other factors affecting the conditions for learning in the schools. Having readily accessible data that can be aggregated and analyzed easily will enable the district to identify trends and address child welfare and safety issues in the early stages. Increased roll-out of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports districtwide will help develop a culture that encourages productive and safe student behaviors. The focus on high expectations systemwide will promote a safe and secure learning environment as the district strives to maximize quality instructional time for every student.

In addition, the district will partner with local law enforcement agencies as appropriate to ensure that all SPS schools are safe places for students to learn and educators to work. In school year 2016–2017, working with the Southbridge Police Department, the district will ensure that there are trained school resource officers in place at the middle and high schools, during school hours and at school-based events. The district will also build on its existing partnerships with the DCF, the Department of Probation, and the Juvenile Court.

See also Priority Areas 1 and 2.

(3) Steps to improve workforce development services provided to students in the district and their families in order to provide students and families with meaningful employment skills and opportunities.

In school year 2016-2017 the district will form a planning committee to survey families and community partners to identify interest in parent academies to promote wellness, adult education, and home-to-school connections.

The district will continue to build relationships with local business and college partners to create meaningful college and career readiness opportunities. College awareness will begin in elementary school with each classroom “adopting” a college or university. In middle school and high school students will continue this by participating in programs at local colleges.

See also Priority Areas 1 and 4.

(4) Steps to address achievement gaps for limited English-proficient, special education and low-income students

The district will strengthen the Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) program for English learners in all grades with a multi-targeted approach with attention to both sheltered content and ESL instruction. The district will build partnerships with local and state stakeholders who are committed to preparing ELs for college and career readiness.

The district will strengthen the academic program for ELs in all grades, ensuring that its program fosters rapid English language acquisition and academic growth. The district will build pathways to support higher levels of English language proficiency in each school. The district will also review its curricula, assessments, and instructional strategies to ensure they are fully effective for ELs.

The goal of ESL instruction is to advance language development and to promote academic achievement. English language proficiency includes *social and academic* language in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ESL instruction provides systematic, explicit, and sustained language instruction, and prepares students for general education by focusing on academic language.

While the district strives for high-quality instruction in every classroom, for every student, it is particularly important that ELs and SWDs have teachers who are skilled in meeting their students' diverse needs. The district will provide professional learning opportunities to strengthen educators' ability to provide high-quality instruction and student-specific supports. For SEI, the district will apply to be an SEI endorsement provider for teachers who are new to the district, or who did not receive the training in the initial roll-out of RETELL. For SEI teachers who have the endorsement, the district will provide content-specific professional development (PD) on the Massachusetts curriculum standards and academic language through the cross-cutting practices and SEI instruction.

In order to identify best practices, inconsistencies, and gaps related to the provision of special education services to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), the district will conduct a review of the policies, procedures, and practices currently in place for its special education program; this review will result in recommendations for action steps to address any gaps or challenge areas. Students will have increased opportunities to receive quality instructional time in inclusive settings. The district will also increase educators' and direct-service providers' time spent in direct service of students.

Additionally, the district will strengthen its after-school and summer- enrichment programs with the introduction of STEM-related ESL/SEI curriculum and embedded PD for teachers to improve their content knowledge, increase their understanding of implementing the standards, and continue to build their capacity to differentiate with culturally and linguistically diverse pedagogy. To foster the rapid acquisition of English language proficiency so that ELs can achieve academic success in all subjects, the district will develop new curricula, formative and summative assessments, and support teachers in the implementation of new programs.

See also Priority Area 1.

(5) Alternative English language learning programs for English language learners

In the 2016-2017 school year the district will disaggregate data pertaining to English learners and former English learners into subcategories to better address individual needs, and provide PD to staff so they understand the gaps in knowledge and specific needs of various groups of English learners.

The district is currently is in the exploratory stages of developing a Spanish-English dual-language program and has met with the Massachusetts Association for Bilingual Education (MABE). The district will create a team of local stakeholders and university partners, holding informational meetings and conducting surveys as a shared vision is created during the school year 2016-2017.

To increase college and career readiness of ELs the district will explore the possibility of a dual-enrollment program for high-school ELs at a local college.

To address the needs of students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) the district will develop a program with curriculum for SLIFE students. In school year 2016-2017 the district will create a system to identify already enrolled students who may be SLIFE as well as a system to identify SLIFE students as they enroll. Additionally, in the 2016-2017 school year the district will provide PD to staff about the needs of SLIFE curriculum development for this sub-group of ELs.

To continue to provide differentiated instruction to ELs in Sheltered English Instruction classes, the district will apply to be a SEI Endorsement provider for teachers who need the initial endorsement. Additionally, the district will provide content-specific follow-up PD on SEI instruction. ESL teachers will also be provided PD in rigorous standards-based instruction. In the fall 2016, a team of four district staff will take part in the Training of Trainers ESL Model Curriculum Unit project, and subsequently will provide PD to teams to develop curriculum for ELs.

The district will investigate alternative program options that can maximize students' strengths as they build their literacy in English and their native language. Some options may be available for all students, for example, a dual-language program to achieve high levels of language proficiency and literacy in both English and Spanish for native-English speakers and native-Spanish-speakers alike. In addition, the district will explore options to address particular needs: for example, a newcomers' program to strengthen the foundational skills of students new to the country and a program to meet the needs of ELs with limited consistency in their education (Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) and Students with Limited and Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)). The district will also explore establishing pathways within existing programs, for example, rapid English language acquisition and academic growth options in both Sheltered Content and English as a Second Language classrooms so that ELs can gain higher levels of English language proficiency throughout their academic experiences.

See also Priority Area 1.

(6) A budget for the district including any additional funds to be provided by the Commonwealth, federal government, or other sources.

The Fiscal Year 2017 budget was adopted by the Southbridge Town Council in April 2016.

See also Appendix C.

Appendix A: Required Contract and Policy Changes

SECTION 1: REQUIRED TERMS FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS

Pursuant to G.L. c. 69, §1K, the Commissioner and the Receiver must create a Turnaround Plan intended to maximize the rapid improvement of the academic achievement of students in the district. The Commissioner and the Receiver will take all appropriate steps necessary to support the goals of the Turnaround Plan. Among other things, the Commissioner and the Receiver may expand, alter, or replace the curriculum and program offerings of the district, or a school in the district; reallocate the uses of the existing budget of the district; provide funds to increase the salary of an administrator or teacher working in an underperforming or chronically underperforming school in order to attract or retain highly qualified administrators or teachers, or to reward administrators or teachers who work in chronically underperforming districts that have achieved the annual goals in the Turnaround Plan; expand the school day or school year or both of schools in the district; limit, suspend, or change one or more provisions of any contract or collective bargaining agreement in the district; add pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten, if the district does not already have the classes; limit, suspend, or change one or more school district policies or practices, as such policies or practices related to the underperforming schools in the district; provide job-embedded professional development for teachers in the district; provide for increased opportunities for teacher planning time and collaboration focused on improving student instruction; establish a plan for professional development for administrators in the district; and establish steps to assure a continuum of high-expertise teachers by aligning the following processes with the common core of professional knowledge and skill: hiring, induction, teacher evaluation, professional development, teacher advancement, school culture, and organizational structure.

Pursuant to G.L. c. 69, § 1K(d)(5), the Commissioner and Receiver are limiting, suspending, or changing provisions of the districts' collective bargaining agreement. As provided below, the provisions set forth in Appendix A are necessary to the successful implementation of the Turnaround Plan and reflect mandatory changes to the district's collective bargaining agreements, policies, agreements, work rules, and any practices or policies pursuant to the collective bargaining agreements. These terms will take effect as of July 1, 2016, and must be included in any future collective bargaining agreements. The Receiver will provide a summary of these changes to each union leader by approximately August 15, 2016. The Receiver reserves the right to make additional changes to collective bargaining agreements as needed. Nothing contained in the Turnaround Plan or the collective bargaining agreements shall be construed to limit the rights of the Receiver and/or the Commissioner as they are provided for under G.L. c. 69, §1K.

These terms shall supersede any contrary provisions of the district's collective bargaining agreements or any pre-existing district or school committee practices or policies. The terms reflect mandatory changes to the district's policies, agreements, work rules, and any practices or policies, and are implemented pursuant to G.L. c. 69, § 1K. Provisions of collective bargaining agreements that are inconsistent with or do not otherwise support the goals of the Turnaround Plan are suspended.

I. Receiver

Pursuant to G.L. c. 69, § 1K, the Receiver for the Southbridge Public Schools is vested with all the powers of the superintendent and the school committee. Wherever a reference in a collective bargaining agreement is made to the "school committee" or the "superintendent," it will be interpreted to mean the "Receiver."

II. Management Rights

Nothing contained in the collective bargaining agreements shall be construed to limit the rights of the Receiver and/or the Commissioner as provided in G.L. c. 69, § 1K.

III. Professional Compensation System

During the 2016-2017 school year, the Receiver will develop a new professional compensation system, which will be implemented after consultation with the union, and which will contain a career path which will compensate employees based on individual effectiveness, professional growth, and student academic growth.

Teachers, from within and outside of the Southbridge Public Schools, may also be eligible to serve in the vacation academies or any other extended learning program that the Receiver implements. Stipends for teaching in such programs will be subject to taxes and/or withholdings, will not be added to the base salary, and will not be counted toward salary for retirement calculation purposes.

The Receiver may review and adjust the salary of an individual employee in order to attract or retain a highly-qualified employee, or when she otherwise determines that such an adjustment is in the best interest of the district.

IV. Teaching & Learning Time

Professional Obligations

Teachers and other professional staff shall devote whatever time is required to achieve and maintain high-quality education in the Southbridge Public Schools. For example, unless formally excused, teachers and other professional staff shall participate in all regular school functions during or outside of the normal school day, including faculty meetings, parent conferences, department meetings, curriculum meetings, graduations, and other similar activities. Teachers will also be afforded regular preparatory time during their work week. Such preparatory time may include common planning periods and professional development.

School Schedules

For the 2016-2017 school year, current daily school schedules will be continued except as approved or required by the Receiver.

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, each elementary and middle school's program of instruction for students shall be a minimum of 1,330 hours per school year.

School Calendar

The Receiver will establish the school calendar each year. The Receiver may approve an alternate calendar at the request of a school principal, if the principal and Receiver determine that the alternate calendar is in the best interests of the students in the school. Alternative calendars may include providing year-round learning opportunities for students.

For the 2016-2017 school year, teachers will report for work on August 22, 2016, and students will return to school on August 29, 2016. The week of August 22, 2016, will include four (4) professional development days and one (1) day for teacher orientation/classroom preparation. Including five (5) snow days, the last day of school will be Tuesday, June 20, 2017.

Newly hired teachers may be required to participate in a week-long teacher orientation/induction program as part of their professional obligation without additional compensation.

V. Evaluation

Educator Evaluation System

Educators and administrators shall be evaluated according to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework as adapted by the Receiver.

The Receiver will develop and implement evaluation processes for all other district personnel.

The SPS educator evaluation system and the SPS evaluation tools for other staff will include a "Receiver's Review." The Receiver's Review will be a fair and expedited process to ensure that teachers, administrators, and other staff of concern are identified and held accountable. During school year 2016-2017, the Receiver will conduct a prompt review of educators on Directed Growth Plans, and educators and other staff on Improvement Plans, and those employees otherwise identified as having poor performance. Teachers, administrators, and other staff whose performance is determined to be unsatisfactory after receiving feedback and an opportunity to improve will be dismissed. Teachers, administrators, and other staff whose performance is determined to need improvement, will be placed on an appropriate plan.

VI. Staffing

In filling positions, principals have the authority to select the best qualified staff from both internal and external candidates without regard to seniority. The Receiver may adopt any procedure(s) that she determines appropriate in filling vacancies.

The Receiver has the right to lay off teachers and other staff because of reductions in force or reorganizations resulting from declining enrollment or other budgetary or operational reasons. The Receiver will establish the selection criteria for layoffs of teachers and other staff. Such selection criteria may include, but are not limited to, qualifications, licensure, work history, multiple measures of student learning, operational need, and the best interests of the students. Where all other factors are equal, seniority may be used as the deciding factor. The Receiver may adopt any procedure(s) that she determines appropriate in the event of a reduction in force.

The Receiver has the right to reassign educators and other staff, including those who have been displaced from their positions. After discussion with the affected educator or staff member, the educator or staff member may be assigned to any open position for which he or she is qualified. If the educator or staff member is not assigned to a mutually agreeable position, the Receiver will assign the educator or staff member to a position for which he/she is qualified. Such an assignment may include instructional support, substitute teaching, or administrative tasks. If no mutually agreeable position is available, the Receiver may lay off the educator or other staff. The Receiver may adopt any procedure(s) that she deems appropriate in the assignment/reassignment of educators or other staff.

The Receiver may reorganize, consolidate, or abolish departments, positions, or functions of the School Department, in whole or in part; may establish such new departments, positions, and functions as she deems necessary; and may transfer the duties and functions of one department to another. In the event of a reorganization, consolidation, or creation of new positions, following consultation with applicable

local unions, the Receiver may require affected employees to reapply for their positions in the district, with full discretion vested in the Receiver about any such reapplications.

The Receiver may formulate job descriptions, duties, and responsibilities for any and all positions in the district.

All SPS staff are expected to be involved in a variety of educational and administrative activities that are necessary to fulfill the mission of the district.

The Receiver may outsource work in whole or in part, may transfer bargaining unit work, and may hire and employ part-time employees.

The Receiver may create nontraditional administrative positions in order to operate the district efficiently. Such positions will not be covered by any district collective bargaining agreement.

The Receiver may change work schedules for all bargaining units to mirror the time that schools are in session and offices are open.

VII. Dismissal

In schools declared underperforming or chronically underperforming, teachers with professional teacher status and all represented district staff that have completed their probationary period may be dismissed for good cause.

VIII. Grievance and Arbitration

Dispute Resolution:

Any dispute over the application, meaning, or interpretation of an action taken by the Receiver/SPS in formulating, implementing, or administering any component of the Turnaround Plan shall be subject to the following dispute resolution procedure, which shall be the exclusive process available for resolving the dispute.⁴³ Accordingly, the provisions of the grievance and arbitration articles of all the collective bargaining agreements are suspended and/or modified relative to such disputes.

Step 1

- The employee may bring a concern to the principal/head of department in writing within five (5) calendar days of the occurrence of the event giving rise to the concern. The employee should specifically state the desired resolution.
- The employee may be represented by a union representative at any stage of the dispute resolution process.
- Within 5 calendar days of the receipt of the concern, the principal/head of department should meet with the employee to discuss the concern.
- Within 5 calendar days of the meeting, the principal/head of department should issue a decision in writing to the employee.

⁴³ This dispute resolution process does not apply to disputes relating to the dismissal of a teacher with professional teacher status. Those disputes will be governed by the arbitration process set out in G.L. c. 69, § 1K(d), or G.L. c. 71 §42, as appropriate.

Step 2

- If the employee is not satisfied with the resolution issued by the principal/head of department, s/he may bring the concern to a senior SPS executive, designated by the Receiver, in writing within 5 calendar days of receiving the principal's/head of department's decision.
- Within 5 calendar days of the receipt of the concern, the SPS executive should meet with the employee to discuss the concern.
- Within 5 calendar days of the meeting, the senior executive should issue a decision in writing to the employee.

Step 3

- If the employee is not satisfied with the resolution issued by the senior SPS executive, s/he may bring the concern to the Receiver (or his designee, if applicable) in writing within 10 calendar days of receiving the previous decision.
- Within 10 calendar days of the receipt of the concern, the Receiver or his designee should meet with the employee to discuss the concern.
- Within 10 calendar days of the meeting, the Receiver should issue a decision in writing to the employee, which shall be final and binding.

General Provisions

- Failure of the employee to advance the grievance to the next level within the time period shall be deemed to be acceptance of the prior grievance response.
- The Receiver may suspend the time periods and notify the union in writing.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the Receiver will develop a dispute resolution process that will be applicable to disputes other than disputes over the application, meaning, or interpretation of an action taken by the Receiver/SPS in formulating, implementing, or administering any component of the Turnaround Plan. Before the implementation of the dispute resolution process, the current grievance and arbitration system will remain in place for such other disputes.

IX. Handling New Issues

Any changes which the Receiver deems necessary to maximize the rapid improvement of the academic performance of Southbridge students may be implemented after a 10-day period of consultation with the appropriate union. These changes may be implemented at the Receiver's discretion, consistent with G.L. c. 69, s. 1K.

X. Existing District Practices

The Receiver may implement changes pursuant to the Turnaround Plan notwithstanding any existing district policy, "past practice," side letters, or extra-contractual agreements. To the extent that a collective bargaining agreement codifies and/or incorporates existing policies or practices, such provisions are suspended.

SECTION 2: REQUIRED CHANGES TO EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

Certain changes to employment contracts between the district and individual employees are necessary to achieve the goals of the Turnaround Plan. The Receiver must have the flexibility to choose and retain principals and other administrative staff who are effective leaders, have the appropriate skills, and bring focus and urgency in implementing the terms of the Turnaround Plan. Consequently, the end date for all

employment contracts or agreements entered into before the declaration of receivership on January 26, 2016, with administrative staff members is changed to June 30, 2017. The Receiver may, at her discretion, extend any such employment contract or exercise the termination provisions of any contract. The changed end date supersedes any contrary provisions in any individual employment contract between the district and an individual employee.

SECTION 3: REQUIRED CHANGES TO OTHER CONTRACTS

The district must ensure that its use of all its resources results in increased student learning. The district will curtail expenditures that do not directly support the priorities identified in the Turnaround Plan, and reallocate funds and staff positions for more productive uses. Likewise, to ensure that its resources support the priorities identified in the Turnaround Plan, SPS will review its vendor contracts and will limit, suspend, or change those contracts where appropriate.

Appendix B: Measurable Annual Goals					
Area Specified by Chapter 69, Section 1K	Measure	SY 2014-2015 Baseline	SY 2016-2017 Target	SY 2017-2018 Target	SY 2018-2019 Target
(1) Student attendance, dismissal rates, and exclusion rates	Attendance rate (Increase)	91.5	92.2	92.9	93.6
	Percentage of students chronically absent (10% or more) (Decrease)	29.0	26.6	24.2	21.8
	Out-of-school suspension rate (Decrease)	8.5	7.8	7.1	6.4
	In-school suspension rate (Decrease)	5.3	4.9	4.4	4.0
	Percentage of students suspended more than 10 days (Decrease)	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5
	Dismissal rate (Decrease) *	6.2	5.7	5.2	4.7
(2) Student safety and discipline	Interpersonal incidents (Decrease) **	116	106	97	87
	Weapons incidents (Decrease)	6	5	4	3
	Incidents of substance possession/use/intent to sell (Decrease)	11	10	9	8
	Incidents of theft/vandalism (Decrease)	19	17	16	14
(3) Student promotion and dropout rates	Grade 9 retention rate (Decrease)	4.9	4.5	4.1	3.7
	Dropout rate – Aggregate (Decrease)	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.0
	Dropout rate – High Needs students (Decrease)	2.8	2.6	2.3	2.1
(3b) Graduation rates	Four-year cohort graduation rate - High Needs students (Increase)	61.3	64.5	67.8	71.0
	Four-year cohort graduation rate - Aggregate (Increase)	64.7	67.6	70.6	73.5
	Five-year cohort graduation rate - High Needs students (Increase)	62.4	65.5	68.7	71.8
	Five-Year cohort graduation rate - Aggregate (Increase)	66.9	69.7	72.4	75.2
(4) Student achievement on Massachusetts assessments; (5) Progress in areas of academic underperformance; (6) Progress among subgroups of students, including students from low-income families as defined by Chapter 70, English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities; (7) Reduction of achievement gaps among different groups of students	ELA CPI - Aggregate (Increase) ***	68.3	70.9	73.6	76.2
	ELA CPI - High Needs students (Increase)	62.7	65.8	68.9	72.0
	ELA CPI - English language learners (Increase)	44.1	48.8	53.4	58.1
	ELA CPI - Students with disabilities (Increase)	40.1	45.1	50.1	55.1
	Math CPI - Aggregate (Increase)	58.8	62.2	65.7	69.1
	Math CPI - High Needs students (Increase)	52.7	56.6	60.6	64.5
	Math CPI - English language learners (Increase)	35.5	40.9	46.3	51.6

Area Specified by Chapter 69, Section 1K	Measure	SY 2014-2015 Baseline	SY 2016-2017 Target	SY 2017-2018 Target	SY 2018-2019 Target
	Math CPI - Students with disabilities (Increase)	32.6	38.2	43.8	49.5
	Science CPI - Aggregate (Increase)	57.6	61.1	64.7	68.2
	Science CPI - High Needs students (Increase)	51.8	55.8	59.8	63.9
	ELA W/F percentage - Aggregate (Decrease)	24.5	22.5	20.4	18.4
	ELA W/F percentage - High Needs students (Decrease)	31.4	28.8	26.2	23.6
	ELA W/F percentage - English language learners (Decrease)	55.4	50.8	46.2	41.6
	ELA W/F percentage - Students with disabilities (Decrease)	61.6	56.5	51.3	46.2
	Math W/F percentage - Aggregate (Decrease)	36.9	33.8	30.8	27.7
	Math W/F percentage - High Needs students (Decrease)	43.8	40.2	36.5	32.9
	Math W/F percentage - English language learners (Decrease)	71.4	65.5	59.5	53.6
	Math W/F percentage - Students with disabilities (Decrease)	72.6	66.6	60.5	54.5
	Science W/F percentage - Aggregate (Decrease)	34.2	31.4	28.5	25.7
	Science W/F percentage - High Needs students (Decrease)	40.8	37.4	34.0	30.6
	ELA Advanced percentage - Aggregate (Increase)	5.8	6.8	7.7	8.7
	ELA Advanced percentage - High Needs students (Increase)	3.5	4.1	4.7	5.3
	Math Advanced percentage - Aggregate (Increase)	12.8	14.9	17.1	19.2
	Math Advanced percentage - High Needs students (Increase)	8.4	9.8	11.2	12.6
	Science Advanced percentage - Aggregate (Increase)	3.2	3.7	4.3	4.8
	Science Advanced percentage - High Needs students (Increase)	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.6
	ELA Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) - Aggregate (Increase)	35.0	51.0	51.0	51.0
	ELA Median SGP - High Needs students (Increase)	34.0	51.0	51.0	51.0

Area Specified by Chapter 69, Section 1K	Measure	SY 2014-2015 Baseline	SY 2016-2017 Target	SY 2017-2018 Target	SY 2018-2019 Target
	ELA Median SGP - English language learners (Increase)	41.0	51.0	51.0	51.0
	ELA Median SGP - Students with disabilities (Increase)	28.0	51.0	51.0	51.0
	Math Median SGP - Aggregate (Increase)	30.0	51.0	51.0	51.0
	Math Median SGP - High Needs students (Increase)	28.0	51.0	51.0	51.0
	Math Median SGP - English language learners (Increase)	29.0	51.0	51.0	51.0
	Math Median SGP - Students with disabilities (Increase)	29.0	51.0	51.0	51.0
	ACCESS for ELLs Median SGP on ACCESS - All ELLs (Increase)	65.0	51.0	51.0	51.0
	ACCESS for ELLs Median SGP on ACCESS - Long Term ELLs (Increase)	27.5	51.0	51.0	51.0
(8) Student acquisition and mastery of 21st century skills	Percentage of high school graduates completing MassCore requirements (Increase)	51.4	55.5	59.5	63.6
	Percentage of students participating in computer science programs (courses, workshops, afterschool programs, etc.) in grades 6-8****	1.3	9.5	17.8	26.0
	Percentage of students participating in computer science programs (courses, workshops, afterschool programs, etc.) in grades 9-12****	23.4	29.8	36.2	42.6
(9) Development of college readiness, including at the elementary and middle school levels	Percentage of high school students having at least one early college experience in high school (includes passing AP or dual-enrollment course) (Increase)	11.4	17.8	24.3	30.7
	Percentage of students achieving college readiness benchmark score on PSAT assessment (Increase)*****	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Percentage of students "on track for on-time graduation" as defined by district	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
(10) Parent and family engagement	Percentage of families, including families whose home language is not English, reporting that they have opportunities to learn how to support their child's learning at home	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Area Specified by Chapter 69, Section 1K	Measure	SY 2014-2015 Baseline	SY 2016-2017 Target	SY 2017-2018 Target	SY 2018-2019 Target
	Percentage of families reporting that they feel welcome when visiting their child's school	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Percentage of families reporting that they receive responses to central office and school inquiries in a timely way	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Percentage of teachers conducting at least three home visits during the course of year	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
(11) Building a culture of academic success among students	Percentage of students reporting that most students in their classes try hard to get good grades	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Percentage of students reporting that they are able to get the help they need to be successful at school	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Percentage of students reporting that their classes really make them think	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
(12) Building a culture of student support and success among school faculty and staff	Percentage of staff reporting that their professional development experiences add value to their work	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Percentage of staff reporting that they have a say in decision-making at their school	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Percentage of students reporting that their culture and native language are respected at school	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Teacher attendance rate (days attended)	94.0	94.5	95.0	95.5
(13) Developmentally appropriate child assessments from pre-kindergarten through grade 3	Percentage of students in kindergarten through grade 2 reaching end-of-year grade level target on ELA diagnostic assessments	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Percentage of prekindergarten students identified as being "on track for literacy" based on district early literacy assessments	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

* Dismissal rate = Total number of dismissals from non-routine student-nurse encounters divided by total number of non-routine encounters

** Interpersonal incidents includes count of offenses for: physical attacks, physical fights, sexual harassment, and sexual assault (including rape)

*** Note that assessment goals are subject to change based on MCAS 2.0 implementation decisions and timelines

**** For this measure, computer science programs must be at least one academic quarter in duration

***** A number of the Measureable Annual Goals are marked with "TBD" because baseline were not available. Southbridge will collect baseline data in 2016-17.

Appendix C: Budget for the District

Southbridge must ensure that its use of resources such as time, funds, human capital, and operational supports results in increased student learning. The effective use of resources to maximize student achievement will be key to the successful implementation of the turnaround plan. This is particularly important given the district's high level of need and limited resources. The Commissioner and the Receiver are fully committed to better aligning the use of resources to support student learning over the period of the Receivership.

The FY 2017 Southbridge Public Schools budget was developed before the Commissioner's appointed Receiver began working in the district, and before the Turnaround Plan's development. It was a highly collaborative effort between the existing SPS district leadership and staff from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, with significant input from school leaders, other district personnel, and town officials. It addressed four key priorities that emerged from the district review, the Southbridge Local Stakeholder Group, in community conversations, and in conversations with school and district staff. These priorities are incorporated in the Turnaround Plan, as shown:

- Increase supports for English learners (*Priority Area 1*)
- Address behavior concerns by increasing social and emotional supports for students and families (*Priority Area 4*)
- Improve teaching and learning (*Priority Area 2*)
- Increase access to and use of technology (*Priority Area 3*)

By reallocating funds and repurposing vacant positions, the budget funds a limited number of new school-based positions and expanded responsibilities for key central office positions.

To support the academic achievement of ELs, both the middle school and high school will add an ELL teacher, and the current coordinator role for ELs will be expanded to become Director of ELL for the district.

To address the significant concerns about school culture, student behaviors, and readiness for learning, there will be five new school-based positions providing social and emotional support for students and families and a new Director of Social Emotional Learning at the district level to coordinate programs and services for students and families across the district.

To improve teaching and learning, two new school-based positions, Humanities Coordinator and STEM Coordinator, and the Chief of Innovation and Learning, will support curriculum development and coaching for teachers at the middle school and the high school.

To increase access to and use of technology, the district's current Network Engineer position will be expanded to a Director of Information Systems and Technology to oversee the integration of technology into the district's education program.

The Receiver recognizes that fully implementing turnaround initiatives will require continuing reorganization and reallocation of resources to best support student learning.

The FY17 general funds budget below was approved by the Commissioner as acting Receiver and presented to town officials on April 26, 2016. The appointed Receiver, who began work in the district on

May 2, 2016, may make reallocations. The list of estimated FY17 grants is as of May 31, 2016, and is subject to change.

2017 General Fund Budget for Southbridge Public Schools	
Schools	
Eastford Road	2,078,704
Charlton Street	3,538,040
West Street	3,505,896
Middle School	4,190,394
High School	5,112,650
Schools Total	18,425,684
Districtwide	
School Committee and Legal	124,300
District Administration	299,932
Finance/Operations/HR	327,342
Curriculum	315,500
Benefits and Retirement Not in Town Budget	539,633
Substitutes	75,000
Professional Development	95,000
Social Worker/Health Services	65,561
Transportation	2,746,301
Athletics	84,089
Office Custodial and Maintenance	486,813
Office Utilities	123,179
Technology	380,461
Copier Leases	70,000
Special Education In-district	979,861
Special Education Out of District	1,276,988

Other Out of District Tuitions	15,000
Districtwide Total	8,004,960
Total District Expenses	26,430,643

Estimated FY17 Grants	
Federal Grants	
Title I	1,194,000
Title II	138,719
Title III	53,544
Title III Summer	2,000
240 SPED	757,835
Early Childhood SPED	35,000
SPED Improvement	12,500
SPED EC Improvement	6,700
Inclusive Preschool Grant	99,700
State Grants	
Kindergarten	76,800
323 School Support	23,000
632 Academic Support	9,800
625 Summer Academic Support	7,300
220-E DSAC Grant	6,700
Total	2,423,598

**Appendix D: Southbridge Public Schools Level 5 District Local Stakeholder Group
Recommendations to the Commissioner and Receiver
Submitted March 28, 2016**

The Southbridge Public Schools were designated by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education as chronically underperforming (Level 5) on January 26, 2016. Massachusetts law indicates that within 30 days of a district being designated chronically underperforming, the Commissioner and Receiver shall convene a local stakeholder group to solicit the group's recommendations for the Commissioner's and Receiver's Level 5 district turnaround plan.

The Southbridge Public Schools' Local Stakeholder Group was convened on Tuesday, February 23, 2016. The statute allowed 45 days for the Local Stakeholder Group to complete its work; the group met five times during this period. The membership of the group, which includes representation as outlined in G.L. c. 69, §1K(b) is listed on the following pages.

All of the meetings were open to the public and were video recorded and posted on the Southbridge Public Schools' website. All meetings were led by facilitators.

The Southbridge Public Schools' Local Stakeholder Group worked diligently to execute its charge to provide recommendations to the Commissioner and Receiver as they create the turnaround plan for the district; these recommendations are designed to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students.

The Local Stakeholder Group submitted the following letter and recommendations to the Commissioner and Receiver on March 28, 2016 within the 45 day window required by statute. The Commissioner and Receiver reviewed and considered all of the recommendations submitted.

From: Southbridge Local Stakeholder Group (LSG)
Date: March 28, 2016

Attached to this memo is a list of recommendations that have emerged from our conversations and deliberations. We believe that these recommendations will provide helpful guidance as you and your team craft a Turnaround Plan for the Southbridge Public Schools.

The LSG met on five occasions:

- Tuesday, February 23, 4:00pm – 6:30pm
- Monday, February 29, 4:00pm – 7:00pm
- Monday, March 7, 4:00pm – 6:30pm
- Monday, March 14, 4:00pm – 6:30pm
- Monday, March 21, 4:00pm – 6:30pm

We reviewed school data, DESE’s District Review Report (October, 2015), as well as other prior studies about the district. The Southbridge Educators Association (SEA) also provided a set of recommendations based on their own discussions with their stakeholders. Their ideas are listed in Appendix E and many of them have been incorporated into this report. Also included in this document are a number of recommendations that emerged from conversations and interviews that the LSG student representative, Ashleigh Prince, conducted with fellow students and teachers.

One paragraph from the SEA’s report struck at the core of many of our conversations,

“Over the years the lack of consistent leadership in the district has resulted in a patchwork of disparate approaches to attempt to meet students’ needs. Our students deserve better than that. Teachers and staff can, and will, deliver a comprehensive education so long as there is a shared vision and common goals between educators and district leaders.”

Finally, we would add that this work will require a significant increase in collaboration with all parents, community members, town officials and all the organizations, non-profit agencies, and businesses that serve the citizens of Southbridge. Without a more comprehensive *team* effort, we will not be able to close the gaps this report has examined.

Sincerely,

The Southbridge Local Stakeholder Group

- ★ **Anna Tsitsilianos** – Teacher, West Street Elementary School
- ★ **Heather Bish** – Special Education Supervisor, Southbridge Public Schools
- ★ **William K. Bishop** – School Committee member (designated by School Committee Chair Scott Lazo)
- ★ **Kristin Mayotte** – Director of Educational Services, Y.O.U, inc.; South Central System of Care
- ★ **Donna Joyce** – Career Center Business Representative, Central MA Workforce Investment Board
- ★ **Michael Keough** – Teacher, Southbridge Middle/High School
- ★ **Maria Murray** – Assistant Principal, West Street Elementary School
- ★ **Lillian Ortiz** – Vice President of Strategic Enrollment Development and Student Engagement, Quinsigamond Community College
- ★ **Amelia Peloquin** – Parent representative
- ★ **Ashleigh Prince** – Southbridge High School senior (designated by Interim Superintendent Connors)

- ★ **Juli Robb** – Teacher, Eastford Road Elementary School
- ★ **Ron San Angelo** - Southbridge Town Manager
- ★ **Pat Spinelli** – Parent representative
- ★ **Joan Sullivan** – President, Southbridge Education Association
- ★ **Rebecca Sweetman** – Associate Principal, Southbridge Middle School
- ★ **Evelyn Velez** – Co-Director of Head Start, Worcester Community Action Council, Inc.
- ★ **Kerry Walker** – Parent representative
- ★ **Dave Williams** – Teacher, Southbridge Middle/High School

SOUTHBRIDGE LSG RECOMMENDATIONS
MARCH 28, 2016

Numbers within parentheses indicate # of LSG votes.

Recommendations below dashed line (----) did not receive any votes at the final meeting but were discussed at prior meetings.

L=Leadership
R=Recruitment & Retention
I=Instruction
C&C=Climate & Culture
SI=Specialized Instruction
T=Technology
C&I=Curriculum & Instruction

PRIORITY	AREA OF FOCUS	RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS	CATEGORY
1 (22)	Closing the Achievement Gap (Curriculum & Instruction)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a multi-year cycle to review and implement curriculum that is aligned vertically and horizontally throughout the district. (8) 2. Develop curriculum that aims high by focusing the rigor and expectations to challenge our skilled and confident students and then provides scaffolding that supports the learning of all students to reach those expectations. (8) 3. Develop common skills (e.g., in reading and writing) and strategies that can be used by students across multiple subjects and contexts. (8) 4. Provide free pre-school program to accommodate 100% of eligible children and offer transportation. (6) 5. Expand the alternative curriculum for students who want to stay in Southbridge but will not be attending college. Seek out collaborative opportunities with town businesses to help craft these alternatives. (5) 6. Deploy more special educators who would collaborate with regular education teachers to provide more inclusive learning environments for students. (4) 7. Maintain or increase current levels of funding for arts, music and other non-core academic programs. (4) 8. Provide time and support for middle school and high school teachers to work on curriculum development during the summer. (1) 9. Partner with Quinsigamond Community College or other institutions to provide early college, dual-enrollment or access to college-level courses in the 	C&I

		<p>evenings or weekends. (1)</p> <p>10. Establish policies that ensure balanced classroom assignments of ELs and SWDs. (1)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>11. Use outside consultants to help guide the development of curriculum as a means of insuring that curricula represent the most current research and highest quality.</p>	
2 (20)	<p>Climate and Culture</p> <p>Develop & strengthen a culture of continuous improvement</p>	<p>1. Develop and strengthen an inclusive culture that allows all to raise concerns openly and honestly without fear of recrimination. (9)</p> <p>2. Provide support for teachers in managing challenging behaviors and support for them when they discipline students appropriately. (9)</p> <p>3. Provide more support for students with behavioral issues by increasing support staff such as psychologists & school adjustment counselors as well as by providing alternative programs for students to gain a rigorous education. (8)</p> <p>4. Develop a clear set of expectations with accountability of what all stakeholders (students, staff, leaders) can expect of each other and what is expected of them. (7)</p> <p>5. Review and evaluate the recommendations of the 2002 Southbridge School Safety report and address persistent areas of need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Create School Safety and At-Risk Youth Task Force that includes teachers, education support personnel, students, parents, community members and representatives from public agencies. o Create Faculty-Administration School Safety Committee. o Establish a formal pathway of communication with the Student Councils on issues of safe and secure learning environments. (6) <p>6. Increase the number of bilingual translators, faculty, and staff across the district. (3)</p> <p>7. Find ways to support the students' voices and encourage more student participation. (2)</p> <p>8. Utilize learning walks with fidelity. (1)</p> <p>9. Create a policy requiring school uniforms. (1)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>10. Better utilize teams and team structure by allowing team members to select the leaders of those teams.</p>	C&C

3(19)	<p>Student Behavior Provide support for students who struggle meeting appropriate behavioral standards</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore alternative classroom settings for students with significant behavioral challenges. (12) 2. Increase the number of school-based psychologists and behavioral intervention specialists at each school. (10) 3. Update, streamline, and communicate an updated handbook that spells out behavior expectations. (7) 4. Evaluate the current procedures for tracking students in need of behavioral evaluations, interventions and ongoing supports. (7) 5. Provide more in-class support for students who struggle. (7) 6. Focus on developing a small number of behavioral expectations appropriate for each development stage that are universally embraced and applied at each level (the key is implementation). (4) 7. Institute trauma-sensitive classrooms. (2) 8. Restructure and appropriately staff the in-school suspension room. (2) 	SI, C&C
4(18)	<p>Improve and strengthen processes that are linked to recruitment and retention of effective administrators who will commit to investing in Southbridge over a reasonable period of time.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop recruitment & retention protocols and faithfully adhere to them. (7) 2. Use the evaluation system as a source of growth rather than as a punitive tool. (7) 3. Strengthen the mentor program. (5) 4. Commit to using the protocols with fidelity. (4) 5. Insure there are adequate checks and balances for accountability purposes and also provide sufficient time for growth and development. (4) 6. Compensate educators appropriately and competitively based on their job descriptions. (4) 7. Hire qualified professionals based on credentials and skills, not friendships. (4) 8. Institute a well defined and proven process for hiring superintendent and principals. (3) 9. Hire (or share with town) a professional HR director that can effectively manage resources and human capital (healthcare, salary scales, discipline, negotiate contracts, manage employee assistance issues, etc.). (3) 10. Adjust and balance the stipends educators are paid for taking on additional responsibilities. (Currently, support for mentoring is not as high as coaching athletic teams). (3) 11. Develop clear job descriptions. (3) 	L R

		<p>12. Provide ongoing mentoring and support for leaders including the superintendent. (2)</p> <p>13. Better activate our in house capacity to develop a pipeline of future skilled teachers and teaching assistants. (2)</p> <p>14. Do a prompt search when there is a teacher vacancy. (2)</p> <p>15. Provide opportunities for teacher leadership. (2)</p> <p>16. Search process for leadership positions needs to include stakeholder voice. (1)</p> <p>17. Expect that administrators will be visible in buildings frequently. (1)</p> <p>18. Offer apprenticeships as a means of developing future teachers and teaching assistants as well as a means of strengthening current teachers (e.g. apprenticeships for science teachers). (1)</p> <p>19. Strengthen relationships with college preparation programs. (1)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>20. Expand the search parameters to reach out to leaders beyond the local region.</p> <p>21. Establish a professional library that educators (and parents) could utilize.</p> <p>22. Create ways for educators to transition to retirement.</p>	
5(17)	Significantly strengthen EL instruction throughout the district.	<p>1. Audit current services for students. Based on service delivery, craft an improvement plan that ensures that all students receive the supports they need. (11)</p> <p>2. Hire licensed English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers to provide pullout and push-in English language development to ELs (11)</p> <p>3. Establish a transitional bilingual education program as a supplement to dual-language and Sheltered English Immersion programs. (7)</p> <p>4. Establish a dual-language program to build language proficiency in both English and Spanish as a featured program for the Southbridge Public Schools. (5)</p> <p>5. Support teachers as they implement new strategies from the SEI course. (5)</p> <p>6. Hire an EL director. (4)</p> <p>7. Review the placements and service delivery models for ELs on Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) and 504s. (4)</p> <p>8. Provide professional development programs leading to ESL licensure for current teachers. (2)</p> <p>9. Provide effective professional development for teachers. (1)</p>	SI

6(15)	Significantly strengthen and communicate opportunities to support students' social and emotional learning.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hire a wrap-around coordinator for each school to align all external support systems. (13) 2. Hire School Adjustment Counselors for each school. (11) 3. Revamp in school suspension model to effectively address students' academic and social needs. (9) 4. Provide professional development on working with students who have been impacted by trauma. (8) 5. Investigate implementing a restorative justice model of school discipline at the high school. (6) 6. Find the right balance between wrap around services (counseling, support, etc.) and accountability (consequences). (4) 	C&C
7(12)	Strengthen professional development and focus on key areas to enhance instruction.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a multi-year district-wide plan for professional development programs based on district curriculum and technology needs. Include professional development that focuses on content area pedagogy. Such a plan must reflect and incorporate teacher voices, student data, and needs of the district. (11) 2. Support effective implementation of initiatives by adequate training and acquisition of materials prior to the implementation process. This is important for administrators as well as teachers. (8) 3. Offer Spanish language courses to current faculty and staff to build internal capacity. (6) 4. Focus Professional Development (PD) on how to work with challenging student behaviors. (4) 5. Move away from a one size fits all approach to PD; teacher needs are varied. (4) 6. Focus on improving rigor. (3) 7. Educators should not be subject to more than two professional learning initiatives each year. Offer a menu of options for educators to target individual licensure, skills or content area needs. (3) 8. Provide opportunities for vertical teams to meet and focus on common problems of practice. (3) 9. Provide support for inclusion. (3) 10. Develop a focus on how to effectively instruct students with dual language backgrounds. (2) 	

		<p>11. Focus on how to develop trauma sensitive classrooms. (2)</p> <p>12. Increase PD opportunities beyond the small number of days allotted. (1)</p> <p>13. Focus PD efforts on developing cultural proficiency. (1)</p> <p>14. Develop a focus on effective use of technology to support instruction. (1)</p> <p>15. Another needed focus is how to co-teach effectively with inclusive instruction. (1)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>16. Hire math and English Language Arts (ELA) coaches.</p> <p>17. Tap into the potential of community resources to provide some professional development.</p> <p>18. Appreciate the benefits of providing teachers time to collaborate with colleagues who either share the same students or face similar teaching challenges.</p>	
7(12)	Strengthen parent & community engagement at all levels and particularly at the upper elementary through high school.	<p>1. Map the external resources (e.g. nonprofit organizations) available to the schools - especially, organizations that have missions that dovetail with Southbridge Public Schools’ (SPS) educational goals. Clarify how the agencies can support school goals. (9)</p> <p>2. Employ a full-time outreach worker in each school building to improve connections between home, school and community. Improve outreach services to parents so they feel welcome into schools and offer them workshops on getting children “ready to learn.” (5)</p> <p>3. Create additional parent liaison positions sufficient to meet district needs. (5)</p> <p>4. Select a student data management system and implement it effectively so that parent/teacher communication can be enhanced. (5)</p> <p>5. Coordinate with community partners to address issues related to homelessness and transiency and to promote a safe and secure learning environment. Collaborate directly with YOU, Inc. as a partner to provide a variety of community support programs into the schools. (4)</p> <p>6. Expand staff diversity (especially educators or teaching assistants who are bilingual). (4)</p> <p>7. Expand means to have successful communication with parents (update phone numbers & emails, utilize an effective student data management system, utilize the power of social media). (4)</p> <p>8. Clarify and communicate the many ways that parents can get involved and support teaching and learning – it is not just parent involvement, it is parent</p>	C&C

		<p>engagement. (4)</p> <p>9. Create a Post High School Hub with the assistance of community agencies and parents, where students can get assistance with resume development, development of portfolios, SAT prep, & college readiness. (3)</p> <p>10. Develop and promulgate a handbook for parent volunteers. Offer training. (3)</p> <p>11. Explore ways to share resources between the town and the school as a means of expanding services without outstripping resources (e.g. HR, Accounting, plowing, etc.). (3)</p> <p>12. Advertise school events in downtown area. (2)</p> <p>13. Inquire through surveys and other means about parent needs. (2)</p> <p>14. Wraparound Coordinators can be a link to families and the community services. (2)</p> <p>15. Work with local community college to expand dual enrollment potential. (1)</p> <p>16. Expand the use of the buildings in the evenings by the community. (1)</p> <p>17. Establish an Adult Basic Education program that includes English as a Second Language courses, computer literacy, mathematics and workforce development training. (1)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>18. Focus on partnerships that link students and families to employment opportunities and additional job training.</p> <p>19. Make parent meetings more inviting (e.g., add a social component to the focus of the meeting).</p> <p>20. Balance academic communication with relationship building (look to understand what programs have successfully drawn in parents).</p> <p>21. Strengthen the use of school councils.</p>	
9(9)	<p>“Raise The Bar” for all students by enhancing offerings and support for our students.</p>	<p>1. Create a College & Career Hub with the assistance of community agencies and parents, where students can get assistance with resume development, development of portfolios, SAT prep, college applications. (8)</p> <p>2. Address insufficient curricular offerings at the high school (an impediment to higher expectations). (7)</p> <p>3. Address preschool opportunities that are uneven or do not reach all students (an impediment to higher expectations). (7)</p> <p>4. Address very large class sizes at the middle school (an impediment to higher</p>	C&C

		<p>expectations). (5)</p> <p>5. Allow for flexible grouping so that more students can benefit from accelerated learning in one area (5)</p> <p>6. Offer an expanded range of after school opportunities/choices. (4)</p> <p>7. Strengthen college and career planning. (2)</p> <p>8. Work with local community college to expand dual enrollment potential. (1)</p> <p>9. Clarify expectations around entry into accelerated classes. (1)</p>	
10(9)	<p>Strengthen the technology infrastructure and the ways that technology can support improved instruction, communication, assessment, and data collection</p>	<p>1. Select a student data management system and implement it effectively so that parent/teacher communication can be enhanced. (12)</p> <p>2. Strengthen professional development so that educators feel equipped to both access and use technology effectively in their instruction and communication (12)</p>	T
11(8)	<p>Hire additional leaders to effectively manage key areas of learning and support to maximize instructional focus.</p>	<p>1. Key Support Areas Where Leadership is Most Needed</p> <p>a. EL Director (14)</p> <p>b. Grant Writer/Community Resource Director (10)</p> <p>c. Director of Social & Emotional Services and/or Wraparound Services Coordinator (9)</p> <p>d. Technology Director (5)</p> <p>2. Recruit school-based administrators who have proven records of working in districts with ELs, and a wide variety of special education programs. Leaders must be skilled and knowledgeable about successful programs and techniques to meet needs of this district. (3)</p> <p>3. District and school level leadership must have a responsive structure in place to support the entire school community and provide timely feedback and interventions when necessary. (3)</p> <p>4. Recruit school-based administrators who have demonstrated ability to create supportive environments and are committed to collaborative model of decision-making. (2)</p> <p>5. Establish a professional learning network for educators to collaborate on best</p>	

		practices and communicate shared needs with administration. (2) 6. Hire Team Chairs. (2)	
12(6)	Increase the extra-curricular offerings for students.	1. Improve after-school transportation. (15) 2. Require that every student participate in an after school option once a week. (6) 3. Gather input from students to determine the interests and needs for after school programming. (6) 4. Offer an expanded range of after school opportunities/choices (tutoring, clubs, sports, community service). Reframe after school possibilities as a way for students to better themselves. (4)	C&C
13(3)	Provide professional development for members of the school committee.	1. SC members need to be prepared to govern effectively and within appropriate boundaries. (3)	L

APPENDIX E: Southbridge Education Association's Recommendations to the Receiver

The key to any success is collaboration. Problems that begin in the school do not end at the close of the school day. Conversely, problems that begin in the neighborhood do not end once the first bell rings to start school. There is no substitute for a broad based community-wide effort. *Southbridge School Safety Report 2002*

The inclusion of educators in decision-making is vital to any successful improvement plan laid out for Southbridge Public Schools.

Over the years the lack of consistent leadership in the district has resulted in a patchwork of disparate approaches to attempt to meet students' needs. Our students deserve better than that. Teachers and staff can, and will, deliver a comprehensive education so long as there is a shared vision and common goals between educators and district leaders.

The Southbridge Education Association is committed to the improvement of the District and makes the following recommendations to the Receiver preparing the district's improvement plan. We align these recommendations to the areas of concern outlined in the state statute that addresses underperforming districts.

The recommendations come from surveys and conversations the SEA conducted throughout the district:

Social Service

- Employ a full-time outreach worker in each school building to improve connections between home, school and community. Improve outreach services to parents so they feel welcome into schools and offer them workshops on getting children "ready to learn."
- Coordinate with community partners to address issues related to homelessness and transiency and to promote a safe and secure learning environment. Collaborate directly with YOU Inc. as a partner to provide a variety of community support programs into the schools.

Safe and Secure Learning Environment

- Review and evaluate the recommendations of the 2002 Southbridge School Safety report and address persistent areas of need:
 - Create School Safety and At-Risk Youth Task Force that includes teachers, education support personnel, students, parents, community members and representatives from public agencies.
 - Create Faculty-Administration School Safety Committee
 - Establish a formal pathway of communication with the Student Councils on issues of safe and secure learning environments.
 - Establish and increase support for parent teacher associations at each school.
- Increase the number of school-based psychologists and behavioral intervention specialists at each school.
- Evaluate the current procedures for tracking students in need of behavioral evaluations, interventions and ongoing supports.
- Update the district-wide student discipline policies and procedures and ensure consistency and fairness in their application.

Workforce Development

- Establish an Adult Basic Education program that includes English as a second language courses, computer literacy, mathematics and workforce development training.
- Focus on partnerships that link students and families to employment opportunities and additional job training.

Closing Achievement Gaps

- Establish a multi-year cycle to review and implement curriculum that is aligned vertically and horizontally throughout the district.
- Partner with Quinsigamond Community College or other institutions to provide early college, dual-enrollment or access to college-level courses in the evenings or weekends.
- Provide free pre-school program to accommodate 100 percent of eligible children and offer transportation.
- Establish policies that ensure balanced classroom assignments of ELs and SWDs.
- Maintain or increase current levels of funding for arts, music and other non-core academic programs.

English Language Learners

- Hire district-wide English-as-a-second language program director
- Hire licensed ESL teachers to provide pull-out and push-in English language development to ELs
- Establish a dual-language program to build language proficiency in both English and Spanish as a featured program for the Southbridge public schools.
- Establish a transitional bilingual education program as a supplement to dual-language and sheltered English immersion programs.
- Review the placements and service delivery models for English language learners on IEPs and 504s.
- Provide professional development programs leading to ESL Licensure for current teachers.

Leadership

- Recruit school-based administrators who have proven records of working in districts with English language learners, and a wide variety of special education programs. Leaders must be skilled and knowledgeable of successful programs and techniques to meet needs of this district.
- Recruit school-based administrators who have demonstrated ability to create supportive environments and are committed to collaborative model of decision making.
- District and school level leadership must have a responsive structure in place to support the entire school community and provide timely feedback and interventions when necessary.
- Establish a professional learning network for educators to collaborate on best practices and communicate shared needs with administration.

Climate and Culture

- Strategic planning to establish a climate that supports parents, students and educators working together for academic achievement.

- Establish district-wide practices and protocols for faculty and staff to communicate with families.
- Increase the number of extra-curricular activities and academic support services, tutoring, and community events available after school and located in the school buildings.
- Provide additional options for transportation to and from the school buildings to support extra-curricular activities and community participation.
- Increase the number of bilingual translators, faculty and staff across the district.
- Offer Spanish language courses to current faculty and staff to build internal capacity.

Professional Development

- A multi-year district-wide plan for professional development programs based on district curriculum and technology needs. Include professional development that focuses on content area pedagogy
- Educator should not be subject to more than two professional learning initiatives each year. Offer a menu of options for educators to target individual licensure, skills or content area needs.